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Saturday 3 October 2009

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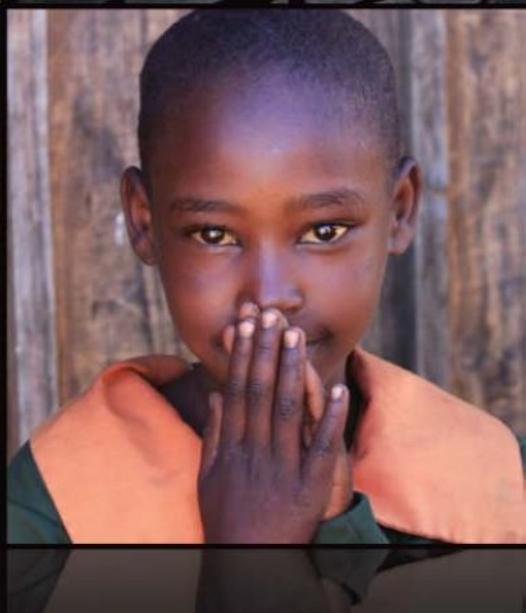
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Beginner DSLRs from Canon and Nikon go head to head

Send us your pictures

To have your pictures published in Gallery, send in a selection of up to ten images. They can be either a selection of different images or all have the same theme. Digital files sent on CD should be saved in a Photoshop-compatible format, such as JPEG or TIFF, with a contact sheet and submission form. Visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apgallery for details. We cannot publish images without the necessary technical details. Each RGB image should be a **minimum of 2480 pixels** along its longest length. Transparencies and prints are also accepted. We recommend that transparencies are sent without glass mounts and posted via Special Delivery. For transparencies, prints or discs to be returned you must include an SAE with sufficient postage.



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© Joe Cornish

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Time marches on



Damien Demolder
Editor

There's none of us getting younger. While the youngest of us long to be taken seriously and to determine their

own future, the less young regret the balance between life to come and life passed by. I turned 40 recently, and felt for the first time that I'd travelled beyond the point where most of the journey was before me. Of course, satisfaction is a product of quality rather than quantity, but without the surety of a crystal ball my normal optimism is clouded with the uncertainty that I've yet to enjoy either.

Some things clearly do get better with age. Fine red wine becomes more mellow and rounded, and a stew is always far tastier after a night in the pot. On the other hand, average wine needs to be enjoyed straightaway, as do cream cakes. AP must be a special case as it is in peak condition, being fresh as well as having sat maturing on the shelf for more than a century. We've been having great fun over the past few weeks looking through the magazine's archive as we search out the snippets, famous names and historic events to help us celebrate 125 years of AP in next week's special issue. Life begins at 125, it seems, so make sure you don't miss it.

Our question of the week

In AP 19 September we asked...

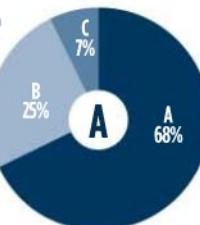
Does your current camera really help you to take better pictures than the model you had five years ago?

You answered...

A Yes, it does 68%

B No, my pictures are just as good 25%

C No, my pictures are now worse 7%



This week we ask...

For how long have you been reading AP?

A 1-5 years **B** 6-10 years **C** 11-20 years

D 20-50 years **E** More than 50 years

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News

News | Analysis | Comment | PhotoDiary 3/10/09

CC A photography enthusiast was made to feel like a criminal and had to call out a doctor after police stopped him filming in a Cheshire park **GG**

Rights watch, page 7

DSLR boasts 'cross-process' mode | Live view and HD movies

Pentax surprises with K-x DSLR launch

FIRST-TIME DSLR users are the target for a new 12.4-million-pixel digital SLR from Pentax called the K-x, featuring HD video and a top equivalent ISO expandable up to 12,800.

Though not designed to replace any other camera, Pentax UK has confirmed that the K-m – announced earlier this year – has been discontinued.

Featuring the same chassis as the K-m, the camera appears to take its name from the Pentax KX, a 35mm film SLR camera launched by the firm in 1975.

In a nod to the days of film, Pentax has installed a mode designed to simulate the effect of 'cross-processing', to create 'eye-catching' images.

The original 'KX' was a film camera launched in 1975

This function includes three preset options, plus the ability to set these randomly, according to the firm.

Billed as an 'entry-class' camera, the K-x DSLR houses a new CMOS imaging sensor and the same Prime II imaging processor as its higher-end sibling, the 14.6MP K-7. This aims to boost data processing speed.

The Pentax K-x will go on sale at the end of October, priced around £600, in a choice of black, white, blue and red.

It will be available as a kit with an 18-55mm lens. We understand that the K-x will not go on sale as body only.

The Live View-enabled model includes Face Detection AF to automatically detect up to 16 faces. The camera also uses Contrast AF, and Phase Difference AF.

Like the K-7, the K-x includes digital filter effects such as Star Burst and Fish Eye. Image stabilisation comes in the form of a sensor-shift mechanism.

Photographers can shoot at a rate of up to 4.7 frames per second for up to



17 JPEG files and five raw format frames, says Pentax.

Also on board is a 'dust-removal' mechanism.

The 'Pentax-only' developed model weighs 515g and sports a 2.7in LCD screen carrying a resolution of 230,000 pixels.

The pentamirror-equipped camera features 16-segment metering and an 11-point SAFOX VIII AF system (with nine cross-type sensors). The viewfinder is claimed to offer a field of view of 96%.

The K-x incorporates a built-in High Dynamic Range (HDR) function designed to create one composite image – with 'extra-wide dynamic range' – from three different exposures.

Boasting a top shutter speed of 1/6000sec, the K-x aims to deliver 1280x720-pixel (24 frames per second) videos. However, while there is a built-in microphone, there is no option to add an external one.

The K-x will be launched alongside a new lens. The Pentax-DA L 55-300mm f/4.5-5.8 ED is described as a 'lightweight super-telephoto' that delivers the 35mm viewing angle equivalent of an 84.5-460mm lens.

The zoom will be available as part of a twin-lens kit (which includes the 18-55mm lens), priced £749.99. ● For images and a video preview visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk.



Pentax mulls Micro Four Thirds-style camera

PENTAX is investigating the possibility of launching a Micro Four Thirds-style camera, to compete against the likes of Olympus and Panasonic.

Stephen Sanderson,

product coordinator at Pentax UK's Imaging Systems Division, told AP: 'We are looking into it and investigating different options. We will find out in due course whether

we will do it or not.'

The news comes soon after Sony hinted at the launch of a Micro Four Thirds-style product.

It is possible that Pentax may develop

another hybrid format, incorporating an APS-C-size sensor, for example.

Micro Four Thirds is an interchangeable-lens camera system first announced last year by Olympus and Panasonic. The absence of a mirror box helps to keep down the size of the camera.

SNAP SHOT

'Flashmob' protest

More than 100 amateur and professional photographers attended a 'flashmob' at Canary Wharf, London, in protest at anti-terror restrictions on photography inside shopping centres. 'No one got arrested. There were a lot of security guards, but they just watched us taking pictures of each other,' said Jeff Moore, a spokesman for I'm a Photographer Not a Terrorist, the campaign group that organised the protest.

Touchscreen

Lexmark has added a web-connected touchscreen to three of its new all-in-one inkjet printers. The 4.3in screen allows users to browse a Flickr site, for example, and print selected images or catch up with the latest news via an RSS feed. Prices range from £199-£399. Lexmark has announced eight printers, including a compact wireless model priced £99. Lexmark has cut the ink droplet size to four picolitres across the range, from seven in previous models, and included a new, 'larger' print head.

AP to the rescue

Security guards backed down after wrongly telling a photographer he needed permission to take pictures of a building from a public place, thanks to rights information printed in AP. Ken Lister had been taking a picture of a reflection in the window of a job centre in Newcastle when a guard told him he needed permission to take pictures.

WEDNESDAY

30 SEPTEMBER

EXHIBITION Poetic Documents 1987-2008, photography by Stephen Burrows, until 10 November at Southwark Cathedral Refectory, London SE1 9DA. Tel: 07966 158 903. Visit www.stephenburrowsphotography.com. **EXHIBITION** A Shadow Falls by Nick Brandt, until 3 October at Atlas Gallery, London W1U 7NF. Tel: 0207 224 4192. Visit www.atlasgallery.com.



© STEPHEN BURROWS

THURSDAY

1 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION Obama's People by Nadav Kander, until 10 October at Flowers, London E2 8DP. Tel: 0207 920 7777. Visit www.flowerseast.com.

EXHIBITION Byker Revisited by Finnish photographer Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, until 31 October at Side Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 3JE. Tel: 0191 232 2208. Visit www.amber-online.com.

FRIDAY

2 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION Patti Smith photographs, until 1 November at Dimbola Lodge, Isle of Wight PO40 9QE. Tel: 01983 756 814. Visit www.dimbola.co.uk. **EXHIBITION** AOP Gallery Print Fair (prints to buy from £46), until 3 October at Association of Photographers, London EC2A 4QS. Tel: 0207 739 6669. Visit www.the-aop.org.

SATURDAY

3 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION The East Anglians by Justin Partya, until 13 December at Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norfolk NR4 7TJ. Tel: 01603 593199. Visit www.scsa.ac.uk. **DON'T MISS** Workshop focused on the Lomo Compact Automat (2pm-5pm) at the new Lomography Gallery Store, London W1F 7RE. Tel: 0207 434 1466. Email: lomographyuk@lomography.com.



© JUSTIN PARTYA

SUNDAY

4 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION Living with the Wall: Berlin 1961-1989, until 21 March 2010 at Imperial War Museum North, Manchester M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000. Visit www.iwm.org.uk. **EXHIBITION** I Want It All, includes images of James Dean, until 10 October at The Little Black Gallery, London SW10 0AJ. Tel: 0207 349 9332. Visit www.thelittleblackgallery.com.

MONDAY

5 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION Rich and Poor by Jim Goldberg, until 6 November at the Magnum Print Room, London EC1V 3RS. Tel: 0207 490 1771. **EXHIBITION** Pastoral Visions by Graham Ovenden, until 18 October at Dimbola Lodge, Isle of Wight PO40 9QE. Tel: 01983 756 814. Visit www.dimbola.co.uk.

TUESDAY

6 OCTOBER

EXHIBITION Taken in London by Paul Baldesare and Peter Marshall, until 31 October at Shoreditch Gallery, London N1 6HG. Tel: 01784 456 474. Visit <http://takeninlondon.co.uk>. **EXHIBITION** The Who: In the Beginning by Colin Jones, until 15 November at Proud Central, London WC2N 6BP. Tel: 0207 839 4942. Visit www.proud.co.uk.



Leica to launch APS-C-size compact

LEICA has confirmed the upcoming launch of the X1, a 12-million-pixel APS-C-format fixed-lens digital compact camera.

Similar in looks to Leica's M-series rangefinders, the X1 will house a 12.9-million-pixel CMOS sensor (12.2 million effective pixels) and come equipped with a fixed 24mm f/2.8 lens that gives a field of view equivalent to 36mm.

In normal shooting conditions, the minimum focusing distance is 60cm, but this drops to 30cm in macro mode.

The Leica X1 will offer full manual control, as well as aperture priority, shutter priority and program modes, and an equivalent ISO sensitivity range of 100-3200.

Images can be reviewed on the 2.7in, 230,000-pixel Live View LCD screen on the camera's rear.

Three metering modes will be available: Intelligent Multiple, centreweighted and spot metering. Also featured is exposure compensation, in $\frac{1}{3}$ EV steps up to ± 3 EV.

The X1 also boasts a retractable built-in flash, and a hotshoe for attaching Leica's SF 24D and SF 58 system flash units.

There is no optical viewfinder built into the camera body, but we understand that an optional brightline viewfinder will be available, alongside an accessory handgrip.

Pricing has yet to be confirmed, but the X1 is expected to be available in the UK from January 2010.



Technical comment

Barney Britton
Technical writer



The classically styled Leica X1 was something of a surprise, being announced alongside the full-frame Leica M9. The X1 is the first camera from Leica to feature an APS-C-format sensor, and it shows that the company is keen to explore the emerging 'hybrid' market, currently occupied by Micro Four Thirds cameras from Olympus and Panasonic. Although the X1's 24mm f/2.8 lens is fixed, this new model should satisfy the long-standing demands of Leica users for a genuinely compact camera with full manual control and a large sensor. It will take a full AP test to determine whether the fascinating X1 really is the camera that Leica users have been waiting for, and we hope that review samples will be available very soon.



SNAP SHOT

Pocket scanner

A 'palm-size' 6x4in print scanner has been released by Plustek. Priced a penny under £90, the SmartPhoto P60 can be powered using a USB cable. For details contact UK distributor Intro2020 on 01628 674 411.



Correction

Tamron's recently announced 17-50mm VC lens will be launched, initially, in a Nikon-mount (from September), followed by a Canon-fit version, due on sale this month. AP would like to apologise for the misprint in *News*, AP 26 September.

Bingo

A blogger who posted photos of hospital meals on the internet, inviting the public to guess the dish, has revealed more about his identity. The blogger, known as Traction Man, posted pictures of various NHS meals online, asking people to play a game called Hospital Food Bingo. The patient's review of hospital cuisine has made headlines nationwide. AP can reveal that the south-west-based 47-year-old has worked as a journalist in the photography industry. The blogger, who declined to be named, says he has spent the past 20 weeks in hospital after being 'struck down by a bone and flesh-eating bug'.

Update

Panasonic has updated the firmware for its Lumix G Vario 45-200mm f/4-5.6 Mega OIS lens. Claimed improvements include better AF performance in AFC mode. 'It also enhances performance of autofocusing and stability of OIS (Optical Image Stabilizer) while reducing noise of aperture control for taking movies (except for FHD mode of AVCHD in DMC-GH1). Firmware update version 1.1, which is free, is available at <http://panasonic.jp/support/global/cs/dsc/>. For details call 0844 844 3852.

British photographer scoops astronomy title

BRITISH photographer Martin Pugh has won the Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition – with a picture shot from his garden shed.

The detail in Martin's winning image, 'Horsehead Nebula', was described as 'absolutely stunning' by competition judge Chris Lintott, who presents the BBC's *Sky at Night*.

Martin's picture beat 540 entries, the best of which have gone on show at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London.

The Horsehead Nebula is a dark cloud of gas and dust in the constellation of Orion – around 1,500 light years away from Earth.

'The pink cloud of gas comes from a cloud of hydrogen beyond the nebula, being excited by radiation from the nearby star Sigma Orionis,' explained organisers. 'Bright spots at the Horsehead Nebula's base are young stars just forming.'



MARTIN PUGH

Martin said he captured the image with a 'CCD camera' mounted onto a telescope in the garden shed of his home in Canberra, Australia.

The photographer, who originally hails from Dudley in the West Midlands, said the picture was captured over

14 nights using a total exposure time of 19 hours.

The competition, which is in its first year, was run by the Royal Observatory, Greenwich and *Sky at Night Magazine*.

For exhibition details visit www.nmm.ac.uk/astrophoto.

Kodak printer claims under spotlight

KODAK has defended claims that its photo printers halve costs after the United States advertising watchdog referred the matter to the government's consumer protection body following a complaint by rival printer manufacturer, HP.

The National Advertising Division (NAD) has passed Kodak's advertising claims for inkjet printers and ink to the Federal Trade Commission for 'further review'.

The NAD said it was 'disappointed' that Kodak had 'declined to participate in the self-regulatory proceeding'.

The watchdog added: 'NAD

requested substantiation for claims that consumers will save on average \$110 annually on ink by switching to Kodak ink and printers.'

However, Kodak is standing by its claims. A US spokesman said: 'Kodak's inkjet printer advertising claims are accurate and well substantiated. Our claims are backed by thorough data and testing by independent third parties, information that is widely available to the public online at www.printandprosper.com'.

The watchdog has upheld Kodak's claims on a previous occasion.

SanDisk speeds up CompactFlash

SANDISK says it has doubled the read/write speeds of its latest Extreme Pro CompactFlash memory cards.

Out in 16GB, 32GB and 64GB capacities (priced £197-£657), the Extreme Pro cards are designed to deliver a read/write speed of up to 90MB/s.

The cards should allow photographers to transfer their images more quickly.

'How fast you can download and edit images from the cards makes a big difference when it comes to getting sports images distributed,' said photographer Jeff Lewis, a member of the 'SanDisk Extreme Team'.

Visit www.sandisk.com.

Police stop sparks GP call-out



A PHOTOGRAPHY enthusiast says he was made to feel like a criminal and had to call a doctor out after police stopped him filming in a Cheshire park.

The 58-year-old man has pledged never to return to Town Hall Park in Runcorn after being treated like a 'suspected paedophile', according to the *Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News*.

It is understood that a member of the public had made a complaint to a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) after the photographer was seen near a children's play area.

The photographer, who declined to be named to avoid 'further humiliation', told the newspaper: 'I've been taking photographs there for 35 years... I was filming when the PCSO told me to stop.'

The PCSO reportedly asked him for ID, and ran his name through a computer, but declined to view the captured images.

The photo enthusiast was told that if any more complaints were made he would be arrested and his camera gear seized.

'I feel vilified and persecuted even though I was just a private citizen going about my business,' said the photographer. 'When I went home I was in shock and had to call the GP out.'

A police spokesman told AP: 'A local police community support officer was on patrol in the park on Friday [11 September].'

'Whilst on patrol he saw a man filming near the children's play area and advised him about how his actions could be construed. At no point was the man told to stop filming.'

Photo fees dispute escalates



Committed to defending your photographic rights!

THE dispute over fees paid to national newspaper photographers for the re-use of their images has spread overseas.

Photographers in Paris, France, are now refusing to work for the Guardian News & Media (GNM) group under new terms that mean freelancers no longer receive income from commissioned

images that are re-used.

Earlier this month press photographers staged a protest outside the London offices of *The Guardian* over the terms, which took effect on 1 September and are designed to save money.

Photography rights campaigner Pete Jenkins said: 'The amount of money it will save the group is minimal, but the damage it is doing is huge. Many photographers who work regularly for the group will find their loyalty penalised by as much as 40% of their income.'

More than 1,000

photographers have signed a petition against the move. Supporters include Eamonn McCabe, Chris Steele-Perkins and Don McCullin.

Campaigners urge photographers to write to GNM's managing editor, Chris Elliott, to explain why the 'rights grab' is unacceptable.

In August, GNM denied it was engaged in a 'rights grab', telling protesters that the rules bring the group in line with other national newspapers. For details visit www.ipetitions.com/petition/GNMphotographers/index.html.

SNAP SHOT

HPs sourced

HP has released a new series of Photosmart all-in-one inkjet printers. The Photosmart Premium, priced £199.99, boasts an 8.9cm TouchSmart screen and built-in Wi-Fi. Due out in October, it includes five ink cartridges, including the HP 364 Photo Black. The range also includes the PhotoSmart C4680, which sports a 3.7cm display, and costs £79.99. Visit www.hp.com for more details.

Lego camera

A 3MP digital camera made from Lego bricks is due to go on sale in the UK next month. The Lego Digital Blue, which costs £59.99, boasts a built-in flash, fixed focus and a digital zoom. Online store Amazon says it will receive first stocks on 27 October.

Actor's anger

Hollywood actor Colin Farrell took umbrage with photographers at the premiere of his latest film *Triforce*, in Toronto, Canada. Farrell was reportedly fuming after press photographers asked the actor's sister to move away from the red carpet so they could get a shot of Farrell alone.

Nikon D5000 strikes DSLR 'gold'

NIKON'S D5000 DSLR has won the Gold Award from the Digital Imaging Website Association (DIWA). Judges praised the 12.3MP camera for its ease of use and ability to capture HD video, saying, 'Its powerful functionalities make the Nikon D5000 a convincing digital camera.'

DIWA added: 'The convenient vari-angle LCD monitor allows users to shoot from any angle, and Live View mode gives digital photography an extra dimension.'



The D5000 has not been without its glitches, however. Nikon recently issued a notice to tell customers that, in certain circumstances, some units may fail to switch on. Visit <http://nikoneurope-en.custhelp.com> for details.

Fujifilm to tackle killer bugs

TECHNOLOGY developed by Fujifilm could soon be used to help prevent the spread of mutated flu viruses, according to a press report in Japan.

A Fujifilm UK spokeswoman confirmed that such technology has been announced by the firm's Japanese HQ, but she was not yet able to provide details.

The technology is said to raise the sensitivity of the flu virus testing device by '100 times', according to *Pen News Weekly*, a Japanese photo industry newsletter.

'The company plans to start selling the new influenza virus detection devices utilising the

new technology and related chips for testing the highly toxic H5N1 bird flu in 2011,' adds the *Pen* article.

'To test for the presence of target viruses, samples will be taken from the trial subject's nose and throat. Those samples will then be smeared on the surface of the testing chips that are coated with a solution.'

Pen adds: 'Any chip containing the target virus will show a thick line. The higher sensitivity of the rapid testing device stems from a solution that was developed leveraging the company's expertise in photo film.'

ClubNews

AP's weekly round-up of club news from all over Britain

Solihull Photographic Society

The society hosts a presentation called 'Across The Roof of the World' by Roger Butler on 6 October. The event starts at 7.45pm at The Women's Institute Hall, 745 Warwick Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 3DG. Tel: 02476 463 810. Visit www.solihullphotographicsociety.com.

Crewe Photographic Society

The new season started on 10 September. Meetings take place at Crewe Library, Prince Albert Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2DH. Tel: 01270 569 721. Visit www.crewephotosoc.com.

Ware & District Photographic Society

The new season began on 9 September. This year's programme is expected to include lectures by well-known photographers, as well as digital workshops, competitions and an exhibition (28-29 November). Meetings take place at 7.45pm on Wednesdays at Ware Arts Centre, Kibes Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire. Visit www.wareps.org.uk.

Send club news to: apevents@ipcmmedia.com



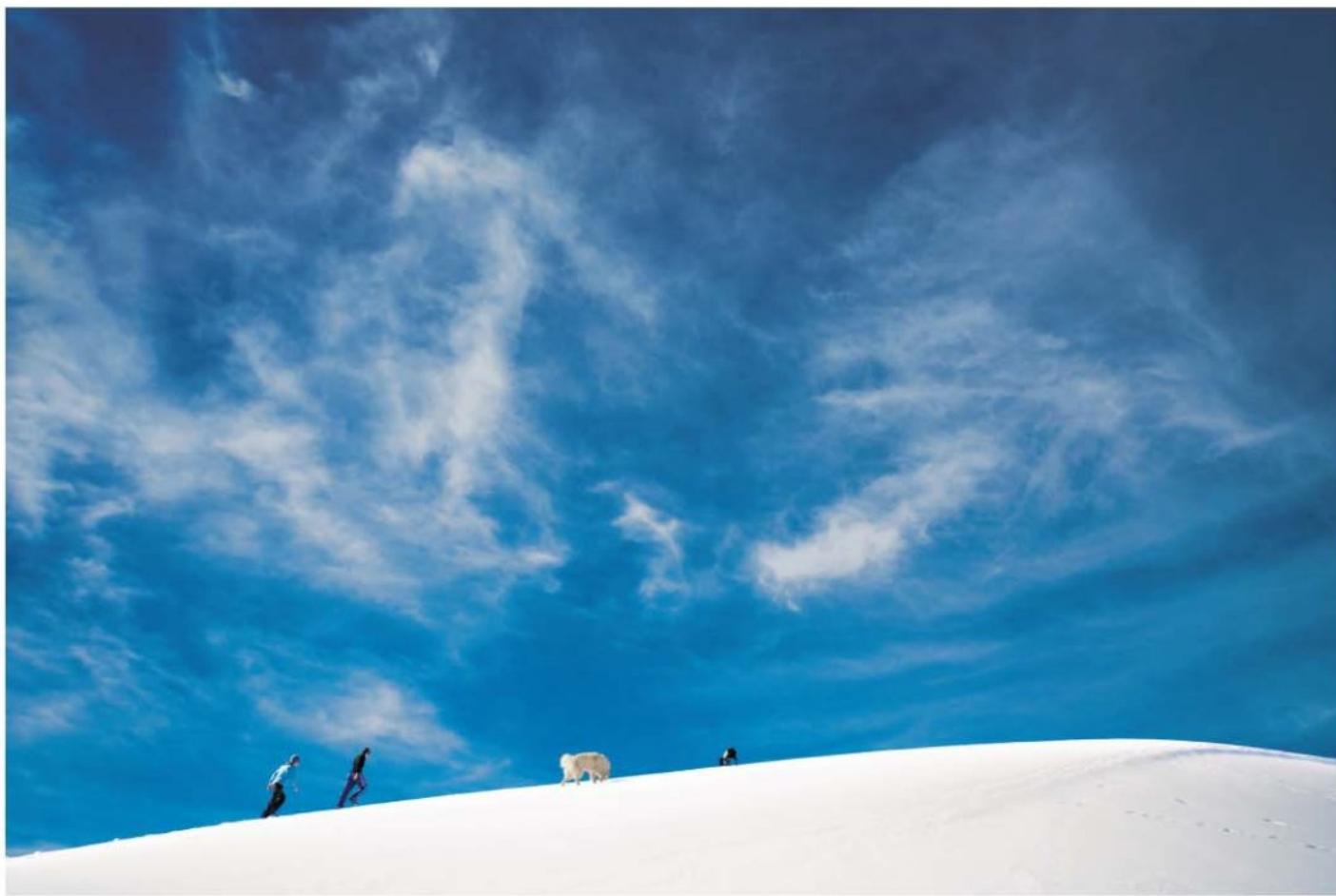
Amateur Photographer

This week in...

1911

AP heralded the start of the darkroom season as the 'saving grace' of the gloom that otherwise marks the end of the holiday season. Those armed with a camera could look forward to once again seeing the places and people they had encountered on their travels. AP's special 'autumn number' was due out shortly to celebrate the fact that amateurs would soon be busily developing, printing and enlarging their photos or making them into lantern slides and exhibition pictures. Meanwhile, a full-page picture by JBB Wellington (above), from the London Salon of Photography's latest exhibition, graced AP's inside front cover. It was at the salon that one visitor was heard to complain about the 'increasing difficulty' of gaining fresh subject matter. However, AP reassured readers: 'There need be no fear of staleness in subject matter so long as there is freshness of eye.'

SIGMA



OUR WORLD

Nathan Welton: Born in 1977 in the United States. Has travelled the world photographing athletes engaged in adventure sports and horseback riding. Featured in advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and other media, his photos have been recognised with a variety of awards. His wedding photography company "Dreamtime Images" is an internationally known studio.

Photo data: SIGMA 10-20mm F3.5 EX DC HSM, 1/640 second exposure at F6.3.

NATHAN WELTON SHOOTS THE WORLD WITH A SIGMA LENS.

In a Colorado national park, the snow-covered dunes stand out against the deep blue sky.

NEW

The striking contrast between the expansive sky, pristine dunes, and people passing through this landscape was captured by the Sigma 10-20mm F3.5 EX DC HSM lens. This super-wide angle zoom lens for digital SLR cameras has a maximum aperture of F3.5 throughout the entire zoom range and its super-wide angle enables breathtaking perspective and one-of-a-kind shots. ELD (Extraordinary Low Dispersion) glass, SLD (Special Low Dispersion) glass and aspherical lenses provide excellent correction of all types of aberrations. The Super Multi-Layer Coating reduces flare and ghosting and the incorporation of HSM (Hyper-Sonic Motor) ensures a quiet and high-speed auto focus.



● Available for Sigma,
Canon, Nikon, Sony and
Pentax cameras

Supplied with case and
matched petal-type hood

A super-wide angle zoom lens for digital SLR cameras that boasts a maximum aperture of F3.5 throughout the entire zoom range.

SIGMA 10-20mm F3.5 EX DC HSM

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www.sigma-imaging-uk.com E-mail: sales@sigma-imaging-uk.com

LIMITED STOCKS NOW IN! New Canon PowerShot G11 (SRP £569) & PowerShot S90 (SRP £449) Enthusiast Compacts due early October!
Both with: Super Low Noise 10MP Sensor, DIGIC 4 processor with 'i-contrast' for high dynamic range, fast aperture wide-angle zoom lenses, large LCD screens, etc. £Phone for more info.



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Latest Bowers Gemini, Lastolite Lumen8 and Prolite Apollo Studio Flash Kits now in, plus backgrounds, reflectors & supports!

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EOS 450D 'Twin IS Zoom' Kit
Latest 12.2MP, 3" Live View LCD DSLR with new EF-S 18-55 IS & EF-S 55-250mm IS Zooms, spare (Hahn) battery, Quantaray Pro UR E30 Backpack & SanDisk Ultra 1.4GB SD Card.

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Canon NEW LOW PRICE! EOS 500D

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Latest 15.1MPixel + HD Video Design, APS-C CMOS sensor, max ISO 12800 sensitivity, DIGIC 4 processor for fast operation and low noise, 3" live view LCD + AF Live View 9 AF points, 3.0fps shooting, huge buffer (170 JPEG shots), Full HD 1080P Movie Mode + HDMI output, lightweight & compact body.

Body plus EF-S 18-55mm IS Zoom
SRP £880 only £619.00



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EOS 40D 'Enthusiast' Kit
Latest 10.1 MP DSLR with 3" Live View LCD, 6.5fps, with 17-85mm IS USM zoom, spare (Hahn) battery, Quantaray Pro UR E30 Backpack & SanDisk Ultra 1.4GB CF card.

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EOS 50D 'IS Superzoom' Kit
Latest 15.1MPixel APC-C sensor DSLR with DIGIC 4 processor + 3" Live View LCD, inc EF-S 18-200mm IS Zoom, spare (Hahn) battery, SanDisk Extreme III 4GB CF Card & Quantaray Pro UR E30 Backpack.

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Fabulous 21.1MPixel Full-Frame Pro DSLR, 3" Live View H-Res LCD, Full-HD Movie Mode etc, inc EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM Zoom, spare (Hahn) Battery & SanDisk Extreme III 8GB CF Card.

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EOS 50D Body
EOS 40D Body Was £730.....
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EF-S 18-200mm IS Zoom (inc EF-S 18-200mm IS Zoom, 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM, 55-200mm f/4-5.6 IS USM, 16-35mm f/2.8 IS USM, 17-40mm f/4 IS USM, 24-70mm f/2.8 IS USM, 70-200mm f/4 L IS USM, 70-200mm f/2.8 L IS USM, 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 IS USM, 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 IS USM)

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AP will feature eight special numbered tokens (one per issue from 10 October-28 November). Simply collect six differently numbered tokens to be entered into the draw to win this money-can't-buy special edition of the amazing Leica M9. Entry forms will be featured on www.amateurphotographer.co.uk as well as in two issues of AP

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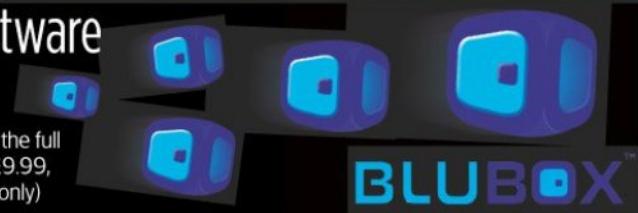
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Review

Your guide to the latest photography books, exhibitions and websites

Website

www.poladroid.net

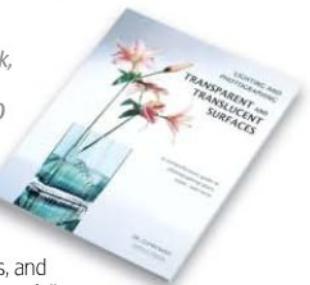
If you are mourning the demise of Polaroid film, Poladroid could be the answer. More than a gimmick, this nifty little site allows users to turn their digital images into Polaroid-style JPEGs. On downloading the free Poladroid application (suitable for both Windows and Mac systems), users can drag JPEG files onto the camera icon and watch as the Polaroid-style image develops. The image slowly appears in the familiar white-bordered frame and can be saved to your computer hard drive. Users can then open the 400dpi file in Photoshop or similar software and make any changes as normal. The pictures are also printable. Keen users can upload their images to a dedicated Flickr group at www.flickr.com/groups/poladroid and super-keen users can even join a forum at <http://forum.poladroid.net/> to debate, ponder and enthuse about the wonders of Poladroid photography. A clever piece of software and ideal lunch-break entertainment. **Gemma Padley**



Book review

Lighting and Photographing: Transparent and Translucent Surfaces

By Dr Glenn Rand
Amherst Media, paperback,
128 pages, £24.99,
ISBN 978-1-58428-244-0



Rand, a professor of photography, has taken one of the trickiest obstacles in photography, shooting reflective surfaces, and balanced a narrow line by carefully explaining how to get perfect exposures and even tone distribution without going all Euclid on the reader in his diagrams and calculations. Rand starts by explaining the different types of light and how they work, the obstacles they create and how to overcome them with simple techniques that anyone can employ, regardless of what make and model is in your kit bag. This may not be a book you reach for every day, but when you're having trouble capturing refraction, for example, you'll be glad to have this on your shelf. **Jeff Meyer**



Exhibition **Abelardo Morell**

Through The Camera's Eye

Until 13 December. Fox Talbot Museum, Lacock Abbey, Lacock, Wiltshire SN15 2LG. Open 11am-5.30pm daily. Tel: 01249 730 459. Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk (type 'Morell' into the Search bar). Admission to the museum, cloisters and grounds: adults £6.30, children £3.20



COURTESY OF ABELARDO MORELL AND THE BONNIE BENRUD GALLERY



COURTESY OF ABELARDO MORELL AND THE BONNIE BENRUD GALLERY

Upside-down trees, inverted steeples and streams of traffic tipped on their heads. No, you haven't stepped into a distorted parallel universe – this is the work of Cuban-American photographer Abelardo Morell, whose dizzying camera obscura images blur the line between reality and imagination. Abelardo, who is based in Boston in the US, creates room-sized camera obscuras in hotel rooms and photographs the inverted images that are projected onto the walls. He covers the windows and doors with black plastic and cuts a hole measuring $\frac{3}{8}$ in (9mm) in diameter to allow light into the room. After setting up his tripod and view camera, he opens the shutter and leaves the room. He returns eight hours later.

There are 25 of these images, mainly black & white, with one or two colour, currently on display at the Fox Talbot Museum. Abelardo has travelled all over the world creating camera obscura images of everything from Tuscan landscapes to the Empire State Building and Times Square in the USA. Outside the main exhibition is a portable camera obscura made from a garden shed reflecting images of the surrounding Abbey onto the walls. Visitors can walk inside the shed to gain an understanding of how Abelardo's images are made. This intriguing exhibition is a unique reminder of the fundamental properties of photography. 'Abe's work is about the process of making photographs,' says curator Roger Watson. 'He works with the building blocks of photography to create strange and beautiful images that celebrate the medium. He is a real photographer's photographer.'

A selection of Abelardo's non-camera obscura, still-life images are also on display. **Gemma Padley**



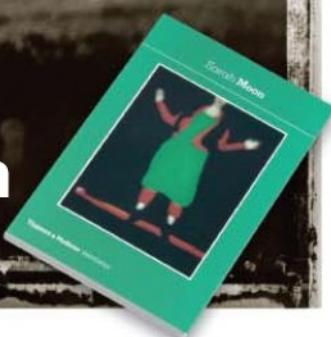
© SARAH MOON



Book review

Photofile: Sarah Moon

Thames & Hudson, paperback, 76 images, £8.95, ISBN 978-0-500-41099-8



If there is one photographer whose work is instantly recognisable, it's the inimitable Sarah Moon. Her soft and dark duotones of dead animals, interiors, parks and women in various poses have a strange magical appeal, even to people who normally aren't drawn to the abstract and esoteric fringes of art. Her work has been compiled in the latest instalment of Thames & Hudson's *Photofile* series. While small, the book comprises all the photographer's most notable pictures as well as exhaustive lists of past exhibitions, books and awards. If you're a fan, this will serve as both a reference and a collection of her best work. **Jeff Meyer**



Letters

Letter of the week

wins a 20-roll pack of 36-exposure Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 35mm film or a Fujifilm 4GB media card (in a choice of CompactFlash, SD or Memory Stick). The sender of every letter published receives a free roll of Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 36-exposure film worth £4.99.



FUJIFILM

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Letter of the Week

Divine intercession?

I was on a day out at a local castle, and while snapping away I lost the grip of my Olympus E-620 and dropped it. Panic stuck me immediately: I'd dropped it from head height. But when I looked down to see the effect of the 6ft drop I was amazed to see it had dropped in the middle of a soft shrub. I picked the camera up and inspected it, taking a look at the last photo I had taken. Check out the sky: someone must have been looking down on me.

**Leon Bingham,
Northamptonshire**



WHYBING/NB2

Going underground

I was surprised that Angela Nicholson made little of the most revolutionary feature of the Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF1 (AP 12 September). She used it to photograph a cygnet from 'about two feet below ground level'. This makes the little GF1 the first digital camera to offer the specialist capacities of 35mm lenses like Leica's Speläologisches-Elmar or the medium-format Zeiss Subtar.

David Hart, Derbyshire

As you can see the camera coped very well, but the swan was traumatised by the event and had to spend several days recuperating at a health farm. It has now been released back into the wild – Angela Nicholson, technical editor

Old before its time

I use both film and digital cameras and agree with much of the content of Jim Brown's letter in AP 12 September. However, the phrase 'now that I have paid for the camera, the computer, the printer and the memory cards, my photography is effectively cost-free' is over-simplistic.

Both the modern photography and computer industries thrive on premature obsolescence. This works at both a psychological and a physical level. The industry invests a fortune in promoting new products to persuade consumers that they really do need new kit. Sometimes this brings real benefits, but sometimes, like the drive to put ever more pixels on tiny sensors or the introduction of Microsoft Vista in the PC industry, the consumer benefits are not obvious. I am amazed when I read of photographers who have 'upgraded' their digital SLRs three times or more in five years. At the physical level, modern kit just isn't built well enough to stay in operation for long, so even if the photographer is happy



KYRIL ALLAN

to stick with, say, a three-year old SLR that needs repairing, he or she will be lucky to find a workshop willing to repair it economically. And aren't the cost of regular sensor cleans comparable to film costs?

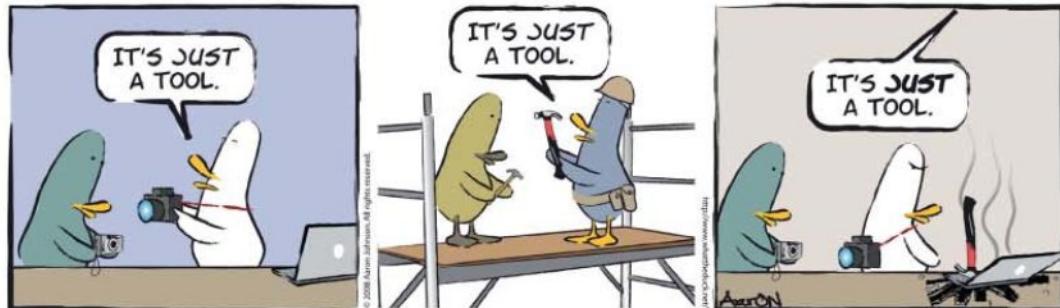
My oldest film SLR, a Canon FX, was made in the mid-1960s so it's about 44 years old (nearly as old as I am). It still takes very sharp pictures, as

the above picture shows. Can we be confident that today's digital SLRs will be usable in 40 years' time, or even in five years?

Kevin Allan, Tyne and Wear

I understand that television presenters suffer from premature obsolescence, too – Damien Demolder, Editor

What The Duck



Write to Letters, Amateur Photographer, IPC Media, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
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* Please indicate whether you would like to receive Fujifilm film or a memory card (please state type preferred) and include your full postal address

Back Chat

AP reader Catherine Metcalfe takes her first steps into the realms of competitive photography

Burden of proof

I have been following your articles about photographers' rights with interest. It seems that officialdom does not intend that photographers should have any rights at all. I was incensed to read that the latest Home Office guidance to the police is that it is a statutory defence for a person to prove that they had a reasonable excuse...

Excuse me! I do not need a reasonable excuse (or otherwise) or any reason at all for taking a photograph. I do not need a defence. It is up to the police to prove I pose a terrorist threat. I hope AP will continue to lobby the Government on this issue.

Norman Thirlaway, Athens, Greece

Yes, AP will continue to defend the rights of photographers
– **Damien Demolder, Editor**

eBay buyer beware

On 10 September, eBay UK sent an email to account holders entitled 'Update to your eBay User Agreement'. On studying it, and the full policies, I found the following: in the case of a dispute with a buyer, the Buyer Protection Policy does not allow any claim that an item 'is significantly not as described' if 'the item has minor scratches and was listed as used'.

I wrote to eBay UK, saying: 'I am concerned about the new "Update to your eBay User Agreement", in particular the example of the presence of a few small scratches on a used item not being a valid cause for complaint. Most of my purchases are for high-specification photographic items, mostly lenses and filters. Small scratches (as opposed to tiny ones, scarcely visible to the naked eye) can have a major detrimental effect on optical performance and these should be a special case in this context.'

This was their reply: 'Thanks for your email about the revisions to the eBay.co.uk User Agreement. It's not possible to accept only certain sections of the eBay.co.uk User Agreement. If you prefer not to use eBay under the revised terms and conditions, you may choose to close your account.'

'Please be aware that once closed, your eBay account cannot be reopened. To protect your privacy we permanently delete your feedback profile, transaction history, personal information and payment details when you close your account. You won't be able to use the same email address to open a new eBay account.'

Perhaps the dangers of buying lenses and filters via eBay are greater than we thought. **Harold Gough, Berkshire**

Disappearing times

Geoff Howard's photograph of the young girl on her bike in Rotherhithe ('Review', AP 12 September) is not only an evocative image in its own right, but it is also a piece of social history. Images such as these, captured by street photographers since photography was invented, have documented social change in a way that no other medium can. Perhaps unwittingly, these photographers have also become historians, capturing and preserving for future generations people and places that may now be gone.

We are fortunate that we can draw on this rich legacy, but will we leave our contribution for those who follow? Street photographers now come under suspicion, risking uncomfortable questioning by those in authority, demands to erase images and possible arrest. Even if we remain unchallenged by others, have we, as photographers, been reprogrammed to behave differently? How many of us today would feel comfortable capturing Howard's image of the young girl at play? I suspect many would walk away and the image would be lost forever.

Howard's images and those of



photographers like him present a compelling argument for resisting the unthinking use of inappropriate laws to control the actions of photographers who, for the most part, are entirely innocent of any ulterior motive. I hope we can win back the lost ground.

John Groves, Derbyshire

You are quite right, and it is very sad. I doubt we can regain that 'lost ground' – **Damien Demolder, Editor**

PHOTOGRAPHY became a serious interest of mine in 2007; I thought I'd taken three OK pictures on my old Olympus compact and entered them into a local show, never expecting them to be placed. After all, never having been to a photography club, what could I possibly know about taking a 'winning' picture?

When the photography tent opened after judging I frantically searched for my pictures. At first I didn't see the other images; I was so eager to find mine that I passed them by. But looking at them later I saw the time, effort and commitment that was being invested in the creation of those photographs.

I spotted the golden 'Third Place' card next to my photo of a sunset at a Norfolk beach; my other two entries were both awarded 'very highly commended' certificates. I was speechless. OK, so it wasn't first place, but as a complete beginner using a basic camera in a competition with 150-plus entries it wasn't half bad. I suppose I was an underdog among more skilled and knowledgeable participants, and considering this maybe I shouldn't have received a place. Had I barged into a competition

where I didn't really belong? I was wrong. The judges were very happy to see me there and were keen to tell me about the society (there were few other 22-year-olds at the event).

For my trouble, I received the prize of £1 – it was a local show, after all. First and second place won £3 and £2 respectively, so there was

little financial incentive. However, it shows that the ability to create a great picture, or a great piece of art, outweighs the financial gain from winning. It's the photography that takes precedence, with a placing being the recognition of a good picture.

The following year I selected some more OK pictures, but was unsuccessful. The overall standard and number of entrants had increased for 2008, and the display boards were crammed with pictures. My pictures were successful in one way, though; from the comments of those viewing them, many were extremely positive. After all, people enjoying the results of your work (prize or no prize) is key, right? Otherwise, there is nothing to build upon.

This relatively gentle competitive environment has developed my photography from being just the usual camera use into a more serious pursuit, always looking for fresh new ideas and views.

Now I have some things to aim for: another placing; to be creative and experimental in my approach; to check out other competitions; and most of all to enjoy taking pictures. Who knows? There may even be opportunities to sell my prints once I understand it all a bit more.



Your thoughts or views (about 500 words) should be sent to 'Backchat' at the usual AP address (see page 3). A fee of £50 will be paid on publication

Photo Insight

Amateur
Photographer
Technique

CLIVE NICHOLS EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF EVEN LIGHTING AND THE INTRICACIES OF FRAMING A PICTURE WHEN ZOOMED IN

I BOUGHT this calla lily from a florist near where I live. Selecting the right flower is an important step in getting the picture you want, so I take the time to inspect each flower very closely. What I'm looking for are its curves and any interesting features it may have. When the petals in the flower form a nice S-shaped curve, I find this usually makes for a good picture. With the right framing and aperture, you can use it as a leading line to give depth to your picture.

As I have mentioned before, my studio is in my living room and nearly all my indoor work is shot there. The

location is perfect, as I have a large window to the left of my living room, and the sun rises above the house. I get no direct light through that large window, only softer, diffused light that lets me see the finer details of the plants I'm photographing.

Sometimes, though, when you're dealing with soft lighting and working so close in, the subject isn't fully lit all the way through the frame. To boost the lighting I often use a reflector on the right side of the subject to bounce some of the window light back onto the areas that appear dark in the frame. This doesn't have to be

The AP experts

Each week, one of our team of experts of Steve Bloom, David Clapp, Tom Mackie and Clive Nichols will reveal the secrets behind one of their great images. This week it's Clive Nichols

CLIVE NICHOLS

Gardens
As the UK's top garden photographer, Clive's knowledge and pictures are in constant demand. His expertise will be invaluable



anything sophisticated or expensive. I use a piece of card or even tissue paper, with the tissue paper also working well to diffuse the light.

For this picture I had to consider my background carefully. As I was shooting so close to the subject and filling the frame with the lily, I didn't want anything distracting that would take the viewer's attention away from the shape of the petals. Often in a single flower study I will go for a complementary solid colour, such as lime green, to offset the pink. In this case, though, a lime green background would clash too much so

Talking technique

As Clive mentioned, using fill lighting can give your subjects more definition and shape, and you don't have to use anything expensive or complex. In the studio, we've aimed to recreate Clive's sidelighting conditions and

demonstrate how easily you can make the most of available light. For the sake of presentation, we've chosen the simple form of this mannequin head, which, when lit from the side, divides the face into two halves: one

well lit and the other immersed in shadow. Notice the effect on the shadowed half of the face when you hold a piece of white paper about 12in (30cm) away. The shadows dissipate and more detail emerges.

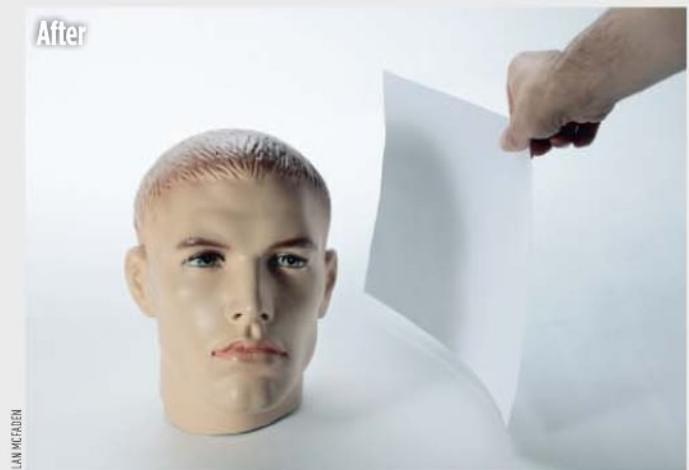


© CLIVE NICHOLS

I wanted something subtle.

When I looked at the lily through my Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III, I liked how the curve of the petal trails off into the distance. With a shallow depth of field and diminishing focus, I realised I could use this to great effect. By using a pale pink background I could create a 'symphony of pink', where the line of the S curve slowly travels out of focus and is lost amid all that colour. I thought it worked really well.

Balancing some pink card behind the lily, I mounted my 180mm macro



ALAN MCFADEN



lens and set an aperture of f/4. I tried several exposures, but 1/500sec seemed to give the best results.

Framing shots this close can be difficult. The slightest movement can change the entire look of your composition, and knowing how much or how little of your subject to include can be tricky. There's no science to it. My method is to get the macro lens on, and slowly move closer and farther away from the subject until it seems to sit nicely within the frame. It's mostly instinctive, and you know

FFraming shots this close can be difficult. The slightest movement can change the entire look of your composition

when something looks right, but bear in mind the Rule of Thirds as this still applies no matter what your focal length. Your points of interest always look better when framed along the thirds, as you can see here with the edges of the two flower petals.

Likewise, you want to consider balance and symmetry in your composition. If either petal edge hadn't been included in this picture, it would feel bottom or side-heavy. It's always good to look for balancing points of interest.

The important thing to remember, though, is that when you get a flower that's photogenic, you have the opportunity to capture a range of different shots. I put mine in a vase and twist it around until I'm happy that I've exhausted every possible angle and feature. And when you've done that, experiment with different depths of field. I like to explore the abstract qualities inherent in each flower. **AP**

To see more pictures by Clive Nichols visit www.clivenichols.co.uk

Adding catchlights to eyes can help brighten and lift them. **Richard Sibley** shows how a simple technique can add sparkle to a portrait

Amateur
Photographer
Software
solutions



The last resort

Before you start

Software
Adobe Photoshop, Photoshop Elements or similar software

System requirements
Windows PC or Mac

Skill required

Time to complete 20 minutes

Technique explained **Hollywood eyes**

WHILE testing the Lencarta Safari 600 ring flash kit (see pages 62-63), I took a series of portraits. I really liked the way they were lit, but the eyes were a little dark and lifeless.

Had I noticed this at the time of taking the picture I could have lowered the lighting in the studio to add a catchlight. However, this would have altered the lighting across the rest of the subject, which I am fairly pleased with.

In the heyday of Hollywood film studios, catchlights would be added or strengthened in the darkroom by using masks and dodging effects. Alternatively, catchlights could be added to eyes using a brush to apply a small drop of diluted photographic bleach or by airbrushing an image.

Of course, these days it is extremely straightforward to add catchlights using Adobe Photoshop. In this example I have used a circular brush to replicate the effect of a

standard studio flash and diffuser. However, with a little ingenuity you can replicate different light modifiers. For example, try using a square brush and the distortion tool to create a softbox catchlight, or use a circular brush with the centre erased for a ring flash catchlight.

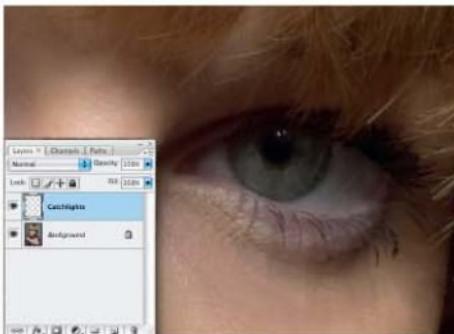
Although I have used Adobe Photoshop CS3 for this tutorial, you can also perform the technique in Photoshop Elements and other image-editing software.

Creating catchlights

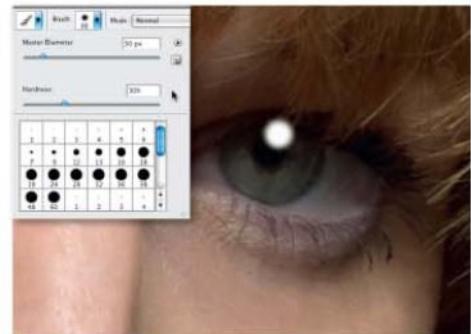
Bring your portraits to life with some added sparkle



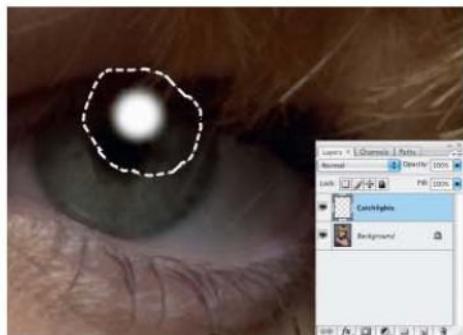
1 Open your image and create a new layer (Layer>New Layer). Name this layer 'Catchlight'.



2 In this image I can see a faint catchlight in the subject's left eye. It is important to try to place the catchlights you create in a natural position, so I will place mine over the existing one.



3 To do this I have selected the Brush tool and set the brush to a suitable size – in this case 30. So the effect isn't too harsh, change the Hardness to around 30%. Then simply paint a single spot on the eye to act as a fake catchlight. By using different shaped brushes you can make it look like different light modifiers have been used.



4 The catchlight in the subject's other eye must be identical to the first one. To ensure this I've used the Marquee tool to select and copy the white spot. As the rest of the Catchlight layer is empty, no other part of the image will be selected.



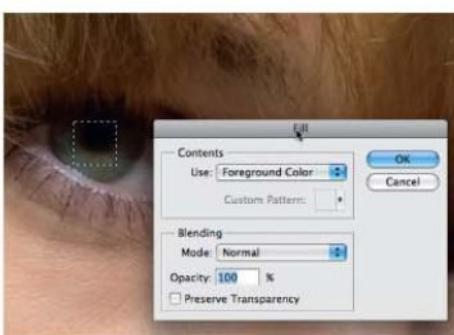
5 Selecting Edit>Paste creates a new layer and pastes the spot to this layer. Using the Move tool I've positioned the spot correctly over the subject's right eye. To merge the two catchlights to a single layer select them both by clicking on both layers while holding the Shift key. I then selected Layer>Merge Layers.



6 There are now two layers: one with the catchlights and the original background layer. I removed the catchlight on the Catchlight layer where it crept out of the eye and onto the eyelashes and eyelid by selecting and using the Eraser tool.



7 After doing this for both eyes, the catchlights look a lot more natural, but are still a little too bright. To solve this I have changed the Opacity of the layer to 55%. The eyes in the final image have a lot more impact than those in the original.



For a more advanced effect I want to create square catchlights to resemble softboxes reflected in my subject's eyes. First, create a new layer, then create a square selection using the Marquee tool. Next, set the foreground colour to white, and fill the square by going to Edit>Fill>Foreground Color. Now select the square using a loose square selection leaving plenty of room around the edges, and blur it to taste (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur).



I've rotated this square slightly (Edit>Transform>Rotate), copied it (which creates a third layer) and pasted both squares into position over my subject's eyes. I then selected both new layers and clicked Layer>Merge Layers. This allows me to adjust both squares on the same layer. I have set the Opacity of this layer to 80%, to avoid the 'reflections' from looking unnatural, and used the Eraser tool to erase part of the squares as in step 6, above.

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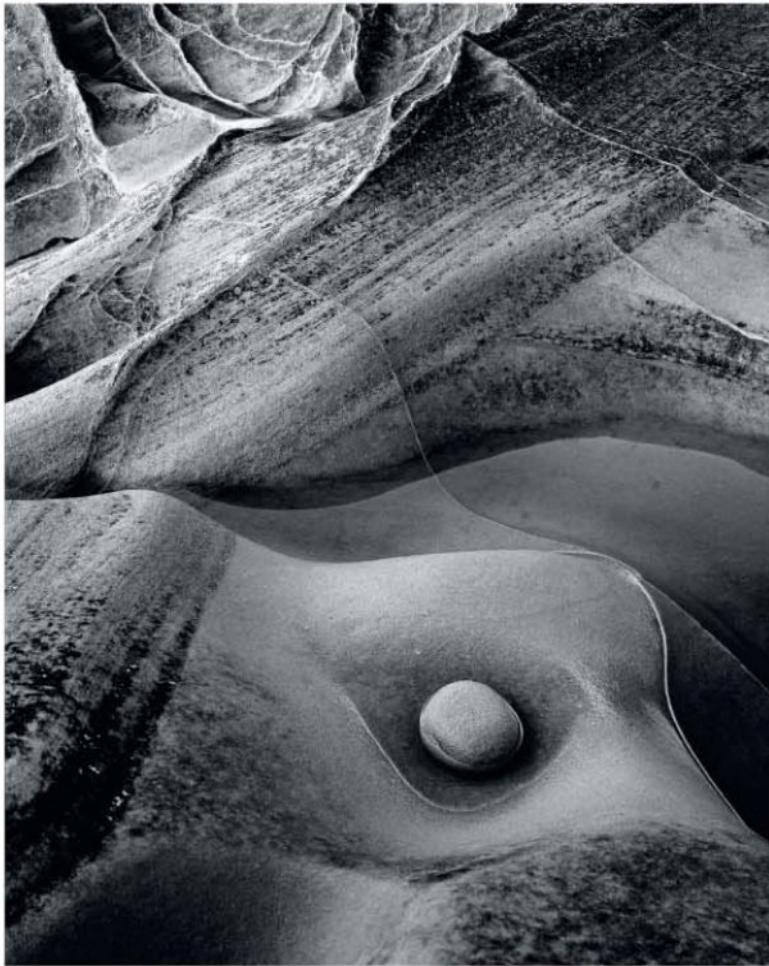
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Photographing Scotland's mountains was the most challenging project of **Joe Cornish's** career. He talks to **David Clark** about his 'personal Everest'

JOE Cornish's near 30-year career has seen him explore landscapes as diverse as the deserts of the American south-west, the Tasmanian coastline and the rainforests of New Zealand. Yet the landscape that became his greatest challenge to photograph lies much closer to home, in the relatively small mountains of Scotland. 'In the realms of mountaineering lore my efforts on the Scottish hills have been puny,' he writes, 'but in the mountains of my mind this book has been my personal Everest.'

Scotland's Mountains: A Landscape Photographer's View features more than 130 spectacular mountain images, almost all of them shot during the past two years, and includes Joe's vivid personal accounts of his experiences while on location. It features chapters on dramatic locations from the Southern Highlands to the remote northern regions, taking in not just lofty peaks and areas of rocky wilderness, but also the more peaceful lochs,

mountain rivers and wooded valleys. Shooting the images for this book involved grappling with unpredictable and often hostile weather conditions over treacherous and sometimes dangerous terrain. As well as wearing stout weatherproof clothing and carrying essential food and water supplies, Joe's commitment to capturing images of the highest possible quality meant that he also undertook these trips laden with his Ebony 5x4in field camera, plus tripod, lenses and other kit.

Although Joe, 51, is a highly experienced walker, the project took its toll; in the book he admits to wondering why he put himself through 'this much fatigue, discomfort, exhaustion, frustration, cold, hunger, and occasionally pain and danger.' Nevertheless, speaking on the phone from his North Yorkshire home, Joe concludes that it was undoubtedly a worthwhile and rewarding experience.

'This project gave me the opportunity to investigate a subject that was already dear to my heart, but which, on reflection, I must admit that I didn't really know that well,' he says. 'The great thing about doing it was to explore these hills in greater depth and connect with them in a more profound



An Teallach from Bidein a'Ghas Thuill, shot late one June evening looking south
Ebony 45SU, 90mm,
Fujichrome Velvia 50





Corrour Bothy, Lairig Ghru. Joe used a one-hour exposure to record this remote place of shelter where he stayed in the Cairngorms Ebony 45SU, 90mm, Fujichrome Provia

ALL PICTURES © JOE CORNISH

I wanted the colour images to really stand out. So when thinking about the introductory texts, I decided to use black & white

 way. The experience was as much about the physical and logistical challenges as it was about the photography. Scotland's landscape is extraordinary and beautiful, but when seeking to make single images that describe its heart and soul it is elusive in the extreme. It's the ultimate moody landscape.

'When I look back on it, virtually every picture in the book had something extreme about it – whether it was the heights climbed, the time of day, or time of year, how cold it was, or whether I was being eaten alive by midges. I frequently felt I was on the edge of what I could cope with. The endurance was part of the experience. On reflection, I realise I learned to enjoy the challenges, accept the frustrations, to stay the course and not to give up. Looking back at the making of the pictures gives me a lot of pleasure – and hopefully it will for other people, too. I realise it has been the project of a lifetime.'

Joe Cornish enthusiasts who are familiar with his all-colour books *Scotland's Coast* (2005) and *The Northumberland Coast* (2007) may be surprised to see a number of black & white images at the beginning of each chapter. It will come as even more of a surprise to find that some of these images were shot on a digital

compact camera, a Ricoh Caplio GX 100. These were taken as what he calls 'background snaps', but Joe was so surprised by the image quality that he has used them to illustrate his descriptions.

'I wanted the book to have quite an austere quality to it, in keeping with the landscape,' he says. 'I wanted the colour images to really stand out. So when thinking about the introductory texts, I decided to use black & white, which I think works well for documentary pictures. As a student and in my early years as a photographer I did a lot of black & white, so I am perfectly comfortable working with it.'

'I used to feel you either shoot colour, or you shoot black & white, and "never the twain shall mix". But if you have a good-quality colour file, Photoshop gives you the opportunity to interpret the [monochromatic] tones much more accurately than arbitrarily selecting, say, an orange or yellow filter at the taking stage. You can apply a much more subtle – or extreme – degree of "filtration", as suits the image. I found the process of conversion to black & white in editing very creative and satisfying. In a way, I suppose I was converted, too!'

Although all the colour images in the main

 **Beinn a'Chlaidheimh.** Joe photographed this remote scene late one October afternoon. Ebony 45SU, 90mm, Fujichrome Velvia 50





Deer skull, Loch Druim Suardalain Ebony 45SU, 150mm, Fujichrome Provia 100F

‘portfolio’ sections of the book have been shot on Joe’s Ebony 5x4in camera, the inclusion of digital images heralds a shift in his working practices. Until now, Joe has resisted a move towards digital capture on the grounds that a 5x4in view camera and film stock (such as his favoured Fujichrome Velvia 50 or Fujichrome Provia 100F) offers photographs of the highest possible quality. However, as the quality of digital imaging improves, its advantages are becoming hard to ignore.

‘I much prefer using a technical camera as I enjoy having the facility to use camera movements in controlling perspective and depth of field,’ he says. ‘But if you do your camera work properly, a 39-megapixel medium-format digital back will produce files very comparable to a 5x4 scan in terms of tonal quality and sharpness. As well as having security of capture (because of the playback histogram) in the field, the raw file is much more exposure flexible than a 5x4 transparency, which is more or less fixed.

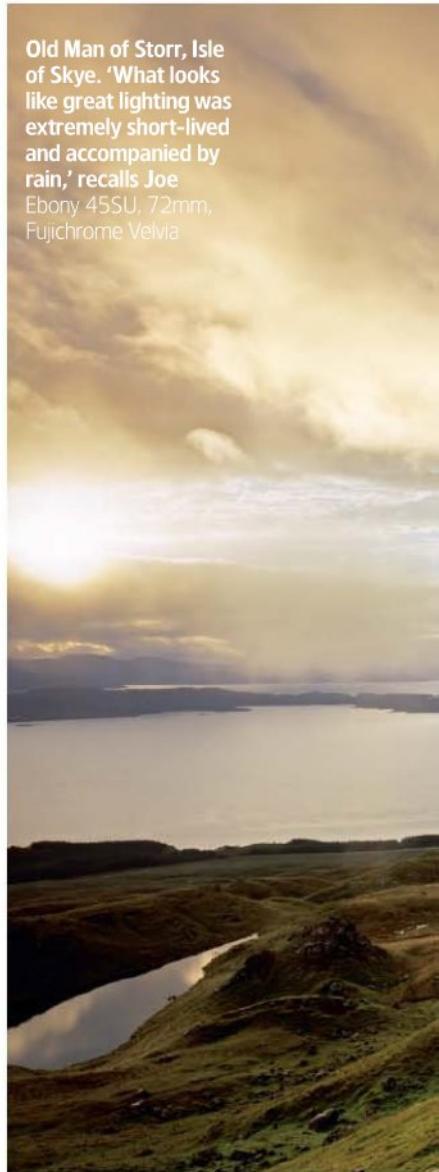
‘A transparency does contain a vast amount of detail in

it, but once you’ve made a scan, there’s only so much you can do to tweak detail out of it. The medium-format raw file that has been correctly captured is simply much more “elastic” and forgiving.’

Other benefits include lower costs and reduced weight in the kit bag. The combined advantages of digital capture, Joe believes, will ultimately make him a better photographer.

‘If, for instance, you’re photographing in conditions that are rapidly changing, 5x4 is limiting because of the cost per sheet, and because in practice you can only really carry 20 or so sheets into the hills,’ he says. ‘But with digital, a single 8GB memory card allows me to make more than 100 photographs. That might seem like a formula for sloppiness, but I see it as an opportunity to be more precise and decisive in the exposure sense, and to take advantage of available lighting opportunities with greater freedom. It’s not about doing it cheap or easy; it’s about trying to improve what I do, and do justice to the landscape.’ **AP**

Old Man of Storr, Isle of Skye. ‘What looks like great lighting was extremely short-lived and accompanied by rain,’ recalls Joe. Ebony 45SU, 72mm, Fujichrome Velvia



It’s not about doing it cheap or easy: it’s about trying to improve what I do, and do justice to the landscape



Scotland's Mountains: A Landscape Photographer's View by Joe Cornish is published by Aurum Press, priced £25

Stac Pollaidh from Sgurr an Fhidhleir **Ebony** 45SU, 90mm, Fujichrome Velvia 50

Joe's essential tips

When taking photographs on mountains there is a level of risk to personal safety, so please take note of the tips below

1 Take a companion

It is always best to have company on the hill, from a safety point of view. Besides, being able to share the physical challenge and the inspiring views must be one of the most friendship-deepening experiences possible.

2 Dress properly

Sometimes trainers might appear adequate for hill-walking, but they are not. Most Scottish mountains will have wet bogs, even after dry spells, and ankle-breaking rocks, tussocks and hidden potholes. Fell boots are advisable in summer, while something more robust (plus gaiters and crampons) will be needed in winter. Temperatures fall rapidly with height, and wind and rain increase. Carrying a quality weatherproof shell jacket, and an insulating fleece consistent with the worst weather anticipated, is essential.

3 Prepare for the unexpected

Unpredictable weather is the main danger. A good weather report is invaluable (try www.mwis.org.uk/, the mountain weather information service), but even the Met Office does not know everything. If the weather appears to be deteriorating, it probably is. If so, always err on the side of safety; hunker down and wait for the storm to blow through, or retreat if it is safe to do so.

4 Avoid dehydration and hunger

The art of being successful on the hill is largely a matter of staying comfortable. Water is heavy stuff, and it is tempting to forget about it, or take just one small bottle. But walking considerable distances with equipment results in serious evaporation, and replacing lost fluids is essential to your comfort and safety as well. Dehydration can lead to serious medical consequences, including death. If you can't carry as much as you will need, drinking at above 800 metres from a rushing mountain stream is usually safe. However, using sterilising tablets or a sterilising pump is a sensible precaution if drinking from any source that is not fast moving and/or below 800 metres. Also, carry enough food for the length of outing you have in mind.

5 Take extra care when descending

The vast majority of mountaineering accidents happen on descent. This is partly due to fatigue, and partly because we are facing away from the hill rather than towards it. Carrying a reliable head torch can be a life-saver.

ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHER

Martin Parr

1952–present

Martin Parr's often controversial work offers a distinctive, bitingly satirical insight into the world around us. **David Clark** looks at his colourful career to date

DURING the past 20 years, Martin Parr has become established as Britain's best-known and most commercially successful documentary photographer. He's a prolific image-maker whose vibrantly coloured, acutely observed images offer a perceptive and often amusing insight into contemporary life.

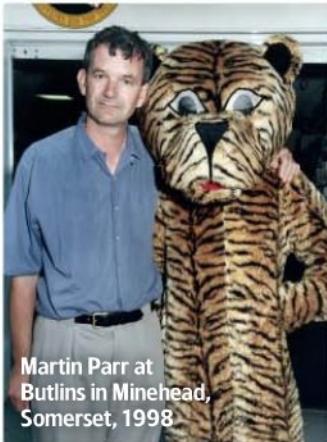
His goal, he says, is to capture the reality of the everyday world, rather than the carefully edited and often idealised viewpoint that many photographers offer. 'We are surrounded by pictures of propaganda of one sort or another, which even quite intelligent people

don't seem to realise,' he has said. 'I am only ever interested in showing the world as it is.'

Parr's interest in photography began in his early teens and was first encouraged by his grandfather, George Parr, himself a keen amateur photographer. Martin went on to study photography at Manchester Polytechnic from 1970–73, where he soon began working on his own personal projects. After graduating, he supported his freelance career with a series of teaching assignments.

His early work, inspired by social documentary photographers of the 1930s such as Bill Brandt, was shot in black & white and aimed, he has said, to 'show the traditional aspects of working-class life in a lyrical way.' His early books, such as *Bad Weather* (1982) and *A Fair Day* (1984), show that while working within the framework of 'traditional' photojournalism, he had already developed his own humorously observational style.

However, in 1984 he began shooting in colour and the results of this new approach were presented in his book *The Last Resort* (1986). This was shot in the run-down resort of New Brighton on the Wirral Peninsula, across the Mersey from Liverpool. Parr's seaside photographs



Martin Parr at Butlins in Minehead, Somerset, 1998





Holidaymakers queuing for ice creams, New Brighton, Merseyside, 1985. Taken from *The Last Resort*

Cup of tea, taken at Sand Bay in Somerset, 1997, taken from *Common Sense*



are the antithesis of the picture-postcard image and capture holidaymakers crammed together on the seafront, waiting in fish and chip shop queues or standing at bus stops, surrounded by overflowing rubbish bins. These images represented the arrival of a new voice in contemporary photography, and capture the everyday reality of New Brighton in an incisive and painfully funny way.

Some commentators felt the images were driven by snobbery. Here, they said, was the work of an English middle-class photographer looking down on English working-class people. It's a charge that Parr denies and, as his other work demonstrates, he finds subjects for comment and critique in a wide range of social classes and cultures.

Further books followed, including *Signs of the Times*, which examined personal taste in British interior design, and *Small World*, which looked at the reality of global tourism. But the 1999 book *Common Sense* broke new ground and established the style for which he is perhaps most famous. In this book, Parr focused on individual objects using a macro lens, ringflash and colour film, and used them to comment on the society and culture that had produced them.

The resulting highly saturated, often garish images of subjects such as fast food, ornaments and clothing, were highly successful. The book's accompanying exhibition ran simultaneously in an unprecedented 30 different countries. Parr's new style was explored further in his

next book, *Think of England* (2000).

Parr has become a celebrated and highly successful photographer, but the style and content of his work often provokes controversy. The arguments surrounding his work were crystallised in the debate generated when he applied for membership of Magnum in 1994. The agency's co-founder, Henri Cartier-Bresson, was shocked by his images and said that Parr's work looked like it was 'from another planet.'

Meanwhile, veteran photojournalist Philip Jones Griffiths felt so opposed to Parr's membership that he wrote an open letter to other members, describing Parr as 'a sworn enemy' of Magnum's inherently liberal and humanistic values. Parr replied that he 'disguised his humanism by making it look like entertainment.'

After a poll of its members, Parr was accepted into the agency by just one vote. He has since become one of its key members. In recent years, he has developed his work to include filmmaking, curating exhibitions, fashion and advertising. He has also produced reference books such as the two-volume work *The Photobook: A History* (compiled over an eight-year period with photo historian Gerry Badger), as well as compiling tongue-in-cheek collections of other people's images, including *Boring Postcards* (1999). He now uses digital capture (a Canon EOS 5D Mark II) to reproduce his distinctive style and his latest book, *Luxury*, which examines the lives of the super-rich, will be published in November 2009.

Parr remains a photographer who divides opinion, but most

commentators would agree that he offers a unique voice in contemporary photography. Although now in his late 50s, and having produced more than 40 books, his enthusiasm for photography remains strong. 'There's so much to do and so much to say about the world,' he said in an interview for AP last year. 'Photographing the world is so interesting, fascinating, depressing and uplifting, all at the same time. You're never going to run out of subject matter or ideas.' AP



Books

Parr has a number of books currently in print, including *Small World*, *Think of England*, *Common Sense* and the career retrospective simply titled *Martin Parr* by Val Williams (Phaidon, 2004). A new book, *Luxury*, will be published by Chris Boot in October 2009 and the revised edition of *The Last Resort* will be published by Dewi Lewis publishing in November 2009.

Website

Martin Parr's own website, www.martinparr.com, includes a comprehensive list of his books with a selection of images from each, plus a CV, FAQ and other useful sections. A good selection of Parr's work can also be found on the Magnum website at www.magnumphotos.com.

Amateur Photographer ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Decisive moments

- 1952** Born in Epsom, Surrey
- 1970** Starts studying photography at Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University)
- 1975** Given an Arts Council of Great Britain Photography Award
- 1984** Takes up colour photography
- 1986** Publication of Parr's first book of colour photographs, *The Last Resort*
- 1994** Becomes a full member of Magnum Photos after a heated debate among its members
- 1999** Parr's book *Common Sense* signals a new direction in his work as he focuses on close-up details rather than wider scenes
- 2004** Appointed Professor of Photography at the University of Wales
- 2005** Becomes an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society
- 2008** Made an Honorary Doctor of Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University



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Round nine From a low angle

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Round 9

From a low angle

Shooting from a lower-than-normal perspective offers a number of dramatic visual effects. Most importantly, however, using a low-angle perspective gives you the ability to show a subject in ways it hasn't been seen before, which is one of our ultimate aims as a photographer. Doing so gives the viewer an intimate view of the familiar and creates an image he or she will look at again and again.

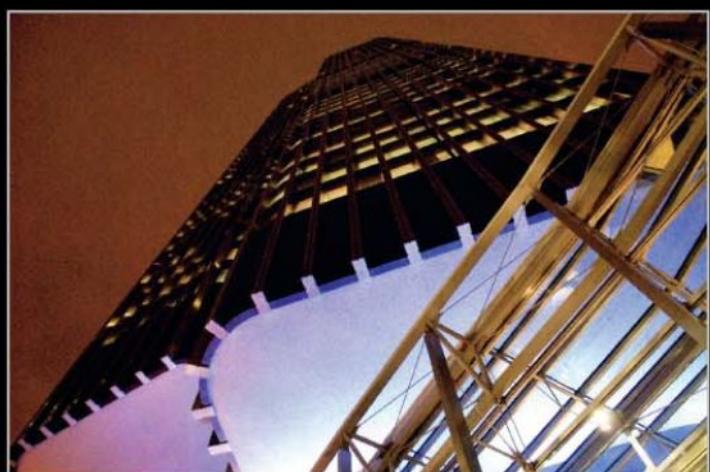
If landscapes are your speciality, try lying on the ground or using a bean bag to see how this ultra-low point of view can transform what might be an ordinary scene into something otherworldly. Likewise for wildlife enthusiasts, setting up your camera at eye-level with your subject can help put it in the context of its environment and make a picture more personal or realistic. Fans of portraiture might also recall the effects of low angles in group shots, such as band portraits, where a guitar player may look down the long neck of his guitar at the camera and appear taller.

A low angle brings great potential for almost any subject, and the key to success in this round is to ask yourself if there is a better point of view before you press the shutter.

Plan your APOY year

Below is a list of this year's rounds, a synopsis of what we're looking for and the dates they will be announced. When you are planning your entries for each round, remember to take into consideration the criteria of fulfilling the brief, creativity and technical excellence on which you will be judged.

| Theme | Synopsis | Announced | Closes | Results |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Leading Lines | Lead me in | 14 Feb | 6 March | 28 March |
| On The Street | Candid life | 7 March | 27 March | 25 April |
| Outdoor Portrait | Get out of the house | 4 April | 30 April | 30 May |
| Plant Life | Artful vegetation | 2 May | 29 May | 27 June |
| H ₂ O | Features and functions | 6 June | 26 June | 25 July |
| Looking Closer | The finer details | 4 July | 24 July | 29 Aug |
| Bold Colour | Complements and clashes | 1 Aug | 28 Aug | 26 Sept |
| Reflection | Double or nothing | 5 Sept | 25 Sept | 31 Oct |
| From A Low Angle | New views from the ground up | 3 Oct | 30 Oct | 28 Nov |
| Low Light | Inside or out | 7 Nov | 27 Nov | 19 Dec |



1st prize

Our first-place winner will receive Canon's EOS 450D and EF-S 17-85mm f/4-5.6 IS USM lens kit, worth £1,129.99. The EOS 450D features a 12.2MP CMOS sensor with 3.5fps capture capability for a continuous burst of up to 53 large JPEG images (six in raw). Its nine-point wide-area AF accommodates off-centre subjects, and other features include a 3in LCD with Live View mode and a DIGIC III processor. The compact, fast-focusing EF-S 17-85mm lens features Image Stabilization of up to three stops compensation and near-silent USM AF for superb image quality.



Worth
£1,129.99
RRP

2nd prize

Our second-place winner will receive Canon's 10MP PowerShot SX1 IS, worth £589. A great all-rounder, the PowerShot SX1 IS offers users a 20x wideangle zoom for incredible reach, with continuous shooting of up to 4fps. With raw recording and full HD movie capability, the PowerShot SX1 IS also features Face Detection and anti-blur technology, and it is also EX Speedlite flash compatible.



Worth
£589
RRP

3rd prize

The ultra-wide, 12MP Canon Digital IXUS 110 IS, worth £319, boasts a 4x wide (28mm) zoom and optical IS, making it perfect for any angle or situation. Capable of recording widescreen HD movies, the Digital IXUS 110 IS also features Smart Auto mode & Scene Detection Technology and Motion and Face Detection Technology.



Worth
£319
RRP

In association with
Canon

**AP
POY**

**AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR COMPETITION**

Entry form

After you've read the rules, send your entry to:

From A Low Angle, Amateur Photographer, IPC Media,
Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU

CLOSING DATE 30 OCTOBER 2009

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms First name

Surname

Address

Postcode

Daytime telephone no.

Email address

Picture details

Camera

Lens

Film (if applicable)

Exposure (if known)

I earn no more than 10% of my total annual income or £5,000 annually from photography (tick to confirm) Please return my entry. I enclose an SAE OR: I do not need my entry returned (tick one to confirm). This entry has not previously been published in a national UK photography magazine (tick to confirm). Amateur Photographer, published by IPC Media Ltd (IPC), will collect your personal information to process your entry. If you would like to receive emails from Amateur Photographer and IPC containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please tick here Amateur Photographer and IPC would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer **not to** hear from us IPC may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer **not to** be contacted If my entry is not successful, I would like Damien Demolder to critique my image in the Appraisal column

RULES ENTRANTS MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE PHOTOGRAPH PER MONTH, AS AN sRGB JPEG FILE THAT IS 2,700 PIXELS ALONG ITS LONGEST DIMENSION, AN UNMOUNTED PRINT (MAX SIZE 210X297MM) OR SLIDE (NO GLASS MOUNTS PLEASE), IN COLOUR OR BLACK & WHITE. THE ENTRANT'S NAME, ADDRESS AND DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER MUST BE ATTACHED TO THE SLIDE MOUNT OR THE BACK OF THE PRINT. SUBMIT DIGITAL FILES BY EMAIL ONLY (NO CDs/DVDs). WHEN SUBMITTING DIGITAL FILE, THE FILE NAME OF YOUR IMAGE MUST BE YOUR FIRST NAME AND SURNAME, THE SUBJECT LINE OF YOUR EMAIL MESSAGE MUST STATE THE ROUND NAME AND YOUR NAME ONCE AGAIN, AND THE BODY COPY OF YOUR EMAIL MUST INCLUDE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER, THE CAMERA MODEL, LENS AND EXPOSURE DETAILS. PHOTOS MUST NOT PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN A NATIONAL UK PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE. EACH POSTAL ENTRY MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE CORRECT ENTRY FORM WITH ALL SECTIONS COMPLETED. A PHOTOCOPY WILL BE ACCEPTED. ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST BE WELL PACKAGED IN A STIFFENED ENVELOPE (NO TUBES, PLEASE) BEARING SUFFICIENT POSTAGE, AND ENTRANTS WANTING THEIR PICTURE BACK MUST INCLUDE A STIFFENED SAE STAMPED TO SUFFICIENT VALUE FOR THEIR RETURN. THIS COMPETITION IS OPEN TO BONA FIDE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND STUDENTS ONLY. THAT IS, ENTRANTS SHOULD NOT EARN MORE THAN 10% OF THEIR TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME OR £5,000 ANNUALLY FROM PHOTOGRAPHY. COPYRIGHT OF ALL ENTRIES REMAINS WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER, BUT AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER AND CANON RESERVE THE RIGHT TO USE ENTRIES, WITHOUT PAYMENT, TO PROMOTE THE COMPETITION. EMPLOYEES OF IPC MEDIA AND CANON, AND THEIR FAMILIES, MAY NOT ENTER THIS COMPETITION. PRIZES AS STATED AND NO CASH OR OTHER ALTERNATIVE CAN BE OFFERED TO THE MONTHLY PRIZES OR OVERALL PRIZE. PRIZE VALUE CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. CANON HAS THE RIGHT TO SUBSTITUTE THE PRIZE FOR A SIMILAR ITEM OF EQUAL OR HIGHER VALUE IF THE STATED PRIZE IS NOT AVAILABLE. NO MONEY CAN BE ADDED TO THE OVERALL PRIZE. THE OVERALL WINNER MUST CHOOSE HIS OR HER PRIZE WITHIN SIX WEEKS OF BEING NOTIFIED. IN THE EVENT OF A TIED SCORE, THE EDITOR WILL CHOOSE A WINNER. THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL AND NO CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE ENTERED INTO. BY ENTERING THIS COMPETITION YOU GRANT PERMISSION TO AP AND CANON TO REPRODUCE YOUR PHOTOS FOR DISPLAY AT AN EXHIBITION, AND ON THE AP AND CANON WEBSITES, SHOULD THEY BE SELECTED.

Tokina

Ultra Wide Angle Zoom. Super Sharp. Affordable.

The new Tokina AT-X 11-16mm F2.8 PRO DX is an ultra-wide angle lens based on the award-winning optical design of the AT-X 12-24mm PRO DX lens. The new AT-X 11-16mm features a fast f/2.8 aperture for better photography in low-light situations and for creating a shallow depth of field. The lens is designed for use exclusively on Canon and Nikon Digital SLR cameras, which have an APS-C sized sensor.

The AT-X 116 PRO DX maximum aperture of f/2.8 remains constant when adjusting the zoom range and the lens also features Tokina's One-Touch Focus Clutch mechanism, so that the lens' focus ring can be snapped back to the manual focus position at any time, from any position.

Amateur Photographer Magazine

"...Tokina offers engineering and optical quality at least the equal of the camera makers."

Geoffrey Crawley

"a state-of-the-art lens" — **photographer**

Tokina AT-X 116 Pro DX AF 11-16mm f/2.8
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Build
Handling
Performance

89%



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Tokina AT-X 11-16mm F2.8 PRO DX
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Gallery

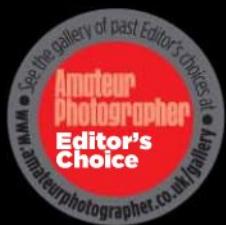
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Visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apgallery for details

Dung Huynh
Greater London

Southwold Pier

Dung has composed this image so that the pier slices through his composition
Canon EOS 50D, 10-20mm, 2.5secs at f/22,
ISO 100, ND filter



This really is a great composition. With the pier entering from the top right-hand corner and the sea rushing out from the bottom left, we can't help but be drawn to the centre of the frame. And when we get there, we have all those delicate colours to enjoy. Excellent understated drama – Damien Demolder, Editor



Swan in mist

1 Dung took this handheld image at Herringfleet Windmill in Suffolk, using the image stabilisation mode on his lens. Canon EOS 5D, 18-200mm, 1/100sec at f/8, ISO 200

Beach in Vietnam

2 Dung combined five exposures in Photomatix and tonemapped this image. Canon EOS 5D, 17-40mm, 0.5secs at f/16, ISO 100, ND grad filter

Icy loch

3 Golden light illuminates Loch Garry in the Scottish Highlands. Canon EOS 5D, 17-40mm, 1/6sec at f/22, ISO 100

Dung Huynh Greater London

Dung, 36, is a scientist by profession, who started taking his photography seriously two years ago when he bought a Canon EOS 5D digital SLR. Passionate about the great outdoors, Dung especially enjoys photographing in the Scottish Highlands, Cornwall and Devon. 'My aim is to capture the best possible light at dawn and dusk,' he says, 'and to get my images right in-camera as much as possible so I spend less time post-processing.'





Clive Smith

Bath

Clive, who is retired, started photography when he was given a Kodak Brownie 127 at the age of 12. His formative photography years were shaped by reading AP, and he was particularly influenced by AP contributor Victor Blackman. 'After 50 years of photography I have never stopped learning,' says Clive. 'The advent of digital imaging has been an exciting and liberating experience for me, and I have only scratched the surface of the possibilities it has opened up.' Clive hopes to continue taking pictures of wildlife and landscapes, and has been inspired by the BBC programme *Coast* to 'photograph his way' around the South West Coast Path. He took these red kite images at Gigrin Farm, a conservation area for red kites in Powys.

Red kites

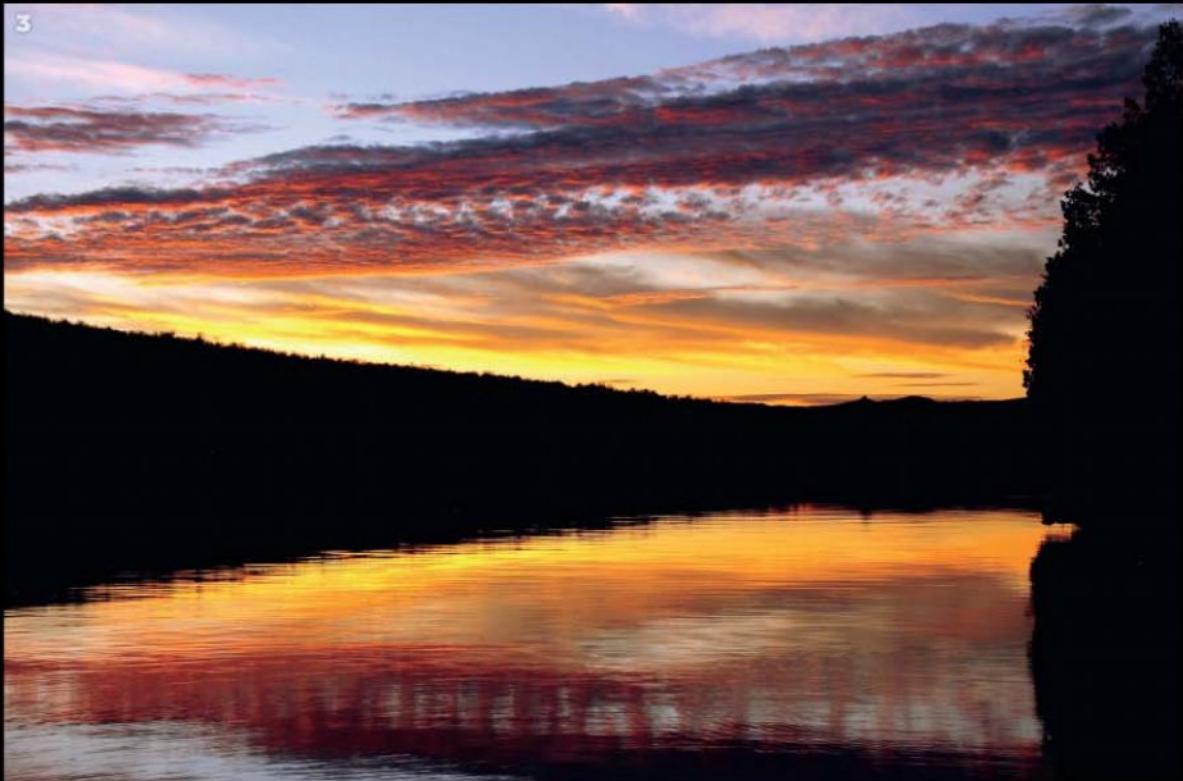
1 Clive used continuous autofocus and made sure he left enough space in the frame while tracking the red kites
 Nikon D200, 70-300mm, 1/1250sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

Lone kite

2 To avoid underexposing the bird by shooting into the sky, Clive used +0.7 exposure compensation
 Nikon D200, 70-300mm, 1/1500sec at f/5.6, ISO 400







Mountain view

1 Tatoosh Mountains viewed from Mount Rainier National Park in Washington
Nikon D300, 18-200mm, 1/40sec at f/14, ISO 200, polarising filter

Coloured hills

2 This image of the Painted Hills in Oregon looks like a close-up of cockle shells on a beach
Nikon D300, 18-200mm, 1/8sec at f/16, ISO 100, polarising filter

Sunset

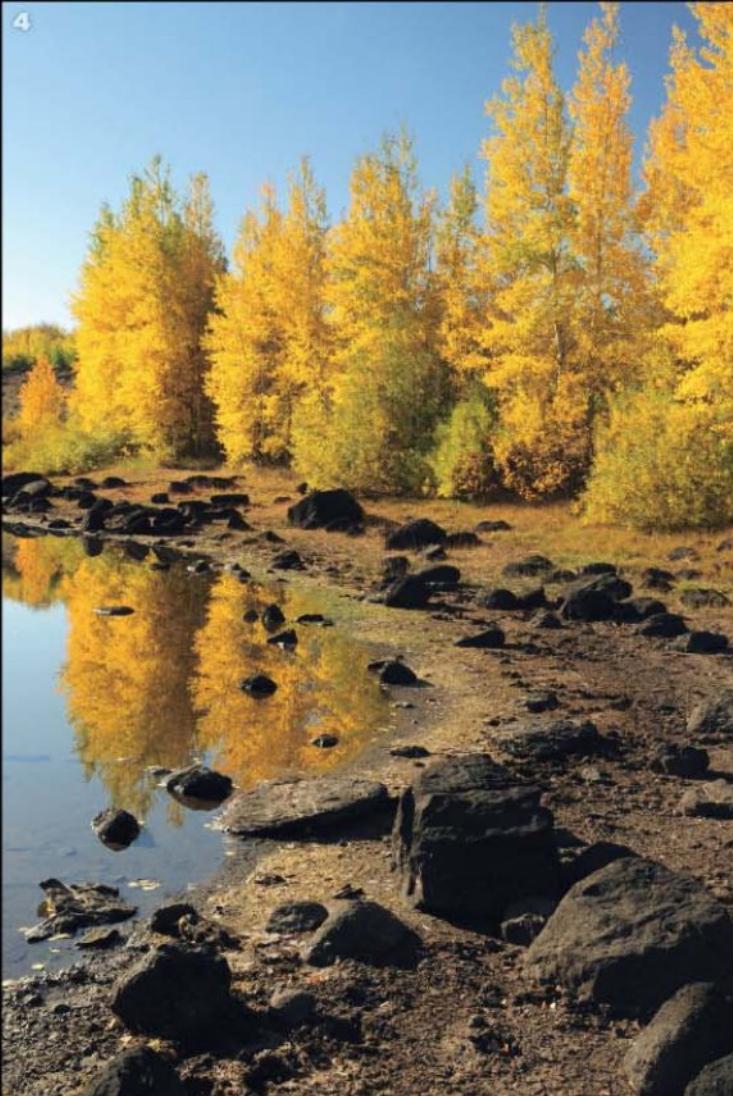
3 Dappled cloud and intense colours are a powerful combination in Michael's image of Rangeley Lake in Maine
Nikon D300, 18-200mm, 1/10sec at f/16, ISO 200, tripod, polarising filter

Golden trees

4 Michael captures vibrant yellows and golds in this image taken in Steens Mountain, Oregon
Nikon D300, 18-200mm, 1/30sec at f/20, ISO 200, polarising filter

Michel Hersen
Portland, Oregon,
USA

Michel, 69, took up photography as a child after he was inspired by his father, who was also a keen amateur photographer. After an initial interest in astrophotography, Michael turned his attention to photographing 'skies' and in the past three years has become serious about nature photography. His aim is to 'capture the grandeur of nature and interesting light' using the techniques of 19th century American artists who painted the Hudson River.



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Appraisal

How to submit your pictures

Send up to six prints, slides or images on CD (please include the original files from the camera along with your submitted versions on your CD). Tell us a little about the pictures and, if you can, include details of equipment used and exposure settings.

Send your photographs to 'Appraisal' at our usual address (see page 3). Please enclose an SAE if you would like them returned.

Expert advice, help and tips from AP Editor Damien Demolder

Bidens 'Gold Star'

Susan Harding

Olympus E-510, 35mm macro, 1/80sec at f/3.5, ISO 100



Susan originally entered this picture for the Looking Closer round of APOY 2009. It's a picture of Bidens 'Gold Star' taken with her Olympus E-510 and a 35mm macro lens. On the Olympus E-system, a 35mm lens is equivalent to a 70mm optic on a full-frame model, and that's a good focal length for flower photography. This is because the perspective it gives is not one of the flower being viewed from afar, nor one of the flower being placed right under your nose. In fact, it will give a tiny amount of perspective distortion, which will only add to the feeling of being there without having any detrimental effect on the picture.

My reason for picking this picture is that it's nice and soft. Susan has set just the right amount of depth of field to show us what it is we're looking at, but without the whole flower head being in sharp focus. As a result, she's created a picture that is in some ways quite abstract and in other ways quite factual. It is this slightly soft, out-of-focus effect that I particularly like, as it includes a lot of detail, yet it is not as sharp as most macro images we see. It's a strange but very appealing image, with nice oranges, yellows and greens blended together, and nicely shaped petals. There's also enough directional light to give the petals a three-dimensional effect, but without creating a lot of heavy shadows. It's a very nice picture.

Finally, with some flower pictures that are incredibly sharp, the viewer is forced to look at all the detail and, though fascinating, it is not always relaxing. Susan's image is instead rather untaxing, by which I mean you do not have to work very hard to enjoy it. This is a very relaxing image, which is surely what a picture of a flower should be. All these characteristics make it my picture of the week.



Original



Dog lover

Colin Webb

Leica D-Lux 4

Colin has photographed an everyday scene of a woman in her garden enjoying the company of her dogs. Looking at the picture it is clear how much Mrs Webb loves her three spaniels, and from their faces you can see how much they love Mrs Webb,

too. It's a very touching scene, and the fact that Colin has included the garden in the background shows us that it's a blissful domestic scene.

There is also a lot of space behind Mrs Webb, which gives an odd feeling to the picture – it makes us wonder why we're being shown all this space when there is nothing to look at there. Generally, we try to put the subject in the middle of the frame, or even better, on a third, and when someone

is facing a particular way it's more usual to include all the space in front of that person. It allows us to see where they are looking into, or where they're heading, which tends to make for a more pleasing composition.

It's a shame that Colin didn't turn his camera on its side to include the top of his wife's head and to give the dogs a little more space in the foreground. If Colin had shot in portrait format I'm confident he could have produced a much more comfortable composition.

For a picture like this we need a comfortable composition so we don't get distracted by the positioning of the subject, and can instead concentrate on the connection between the lady and the dogs. It's a lovely shot, with nice, soft lighting, and it really doesn't matter that Mrs Webb is not looking at the camera; in fact, it's better that she isn't, and that she is instead concentrating on her dogs. To make the composition a bit more comfortable, I've crop in a little in order to reposition the subject within the frame. Of course, what it really needs is for Colin to take a step backwards or turn his camera on its side. Nevertheless, it's a lovely shot, well captured and with nice colours.

See your pictures in print

Damien's picture of the week wins a £50 Jessops store voucher. The two runners-up each win a £25 voucher to spend on photobooks from Jessops' online service at www.jessops.com

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Brands Hatch G Couchman

Nikon D200, 28-105mm, 1/15sec at f/27, ISO 100

Mr Couchman sent in a selection of very blurred pictures of Formula One cars racing at Brands Hatch. He says that he went with the express intention of capturing motion and focus blur, and his picture shows that he succeeded. I think it's a great idea, and I admire Mr Couchman for trying something new. These are certainly like no other Formula One pictures I've ever seen.

The only problem is that although the concept is very good, it hasn't quite worked in practice. That's because when you take the detail out of a subject like this (by blurring it, for example), you're relying more than ever on composition, shape and colour to make the picture work. Here, Mr Couchman has positioned the cars as you would for any normal Formula One racing shot, but because he has blurred the image to the degree that he has, we have not been left with very much to look at. It doesn't even create a feeling of speed – the cars just look blurred.

What Mr Couchman failed to do was consider the graphic nature of his proposed idea, and plan for what the

blurred picture would actually look like. While it is usually fine to include the verge where the tarmac meets the grass, and to have it sloping off to one side casually, in a deliberately blurred picture it is going to be rendered as just a panel of green against grey. Mr Couchman should probably have tried to get the verge parallel with the edge of the frame to divide up the picture, or had the cars coming in from an even stronger diagonal angle. He could also have made more use of his blurred effect by blurring the picture even more, by using a longer shutter speed and panning at a faster or slower rate than the cars as they pass. The trick is to identify what will be included in the frame before you take the picture, and how those things will be captured.

I can see why Mr Couchman has tried to do something different, as Formula One racing pictures tend to look a bit samey and are not always that interesting. He's succeeded to a large extent, but ultimately this sort of picture has to be exciting and communicate the adrenaline of the race. Unfortunately, Mr Couchman's picture does not, although it does hint at the speed and excitement. He should definitely continue with this technique; he just needs to put in a bit more planning and pre-visualisation than he did here.

Edited



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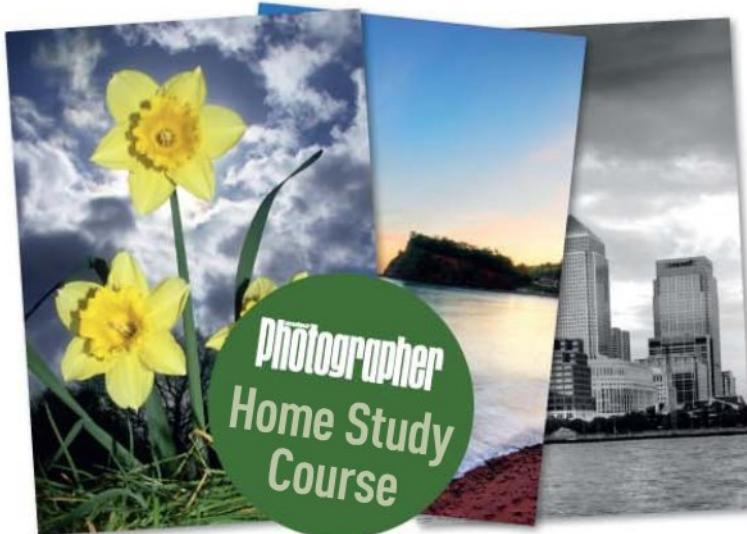
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Test

Welcome to our test, reviews and advice section. Over the next few pages we will present this week's equipment tests, reader questions and technique pointers

Our guarantee to you

All our tests are conducted by people who understand the product area, as well as photography. We aim to discover any shortcomings, as well as finding those aspects that deserve praise. All our tests are thorough, honest and independent

Custom Brackets Gimbal tripod head £489.90

THE Gimbal pan-and-tilt tripod head from USA-based company Custom Brackets is engineered from lightweight aircraft-grade aluminium. All the knobs are made from aluminium or stainless steel, with rubber coatings on the pan-and-tilt knobs making them easy to grip.

The device has to be built before use, but the instructions are fairly straightforward and this process should take around ten minutes. Once built, you need to attach a lens to either the GLM-1 or GLM-2 lens plate. These are designed for 500mm, 600mm or 800mm and 300mm or 400mm lenses respectively, and cost an additional £41.40 each. I tested the Custom Bracket Gimbal with a Nikkor AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8, attached to a Nikon D3.

With the various knobs unlocked the head moves smoothly so you can pan easily, which should prove brilliant for wildlife photographers. If you prefer less torque, the pan-and-tilt movements can be adjusted to help support the weight of the camera and lens when you are framing a shot.

I found that the range of adjustments available on the Gimbal tripod head allowed me to balance a lens and camera easily, and made panning and tilting with a large telephoto lens far easier. However, at around four times the price of a decent 'conventional' pan-and-tilt head this product won't be for everyone.

Richard Sibley



Micro verdict

Great for wildlife and motorsports photographers



For more information visit www.flaghead.co.uk

SanDisk Extreme Pro CompactFlash cards

From £197 (for 16GB)

I'm sure I'm not alone in finding it difficult to get excited about memory cards, but the new Extreme Pro range from SanDisk is rather special. The new range of CompactFlash cards, which are available in 16GB, 32GB and 64GB capacities, double the read/write speed of the previous fastest CF cards, delivering a blistering 90mbps.

As well as very fast data transfer, all SanDisk's range of Extreme media is tested for shock, moisture and temperature resistance, and each card is guaranteed to work in a temperature range of -25 to 85°C. Although I didn't take our test sample to the Arctic and then run a car over it to test these durability claims, I did take a hundred of photographs with it, and even shooting fast sequences of 14-bit raw files with a 12-million-pixel DSLR, the images are written to the card almost instantly. This speed advantage also applies when images are uploaded to a computer. Using a FireWire 800 CF reader, 5GB of data uploaded in exactly 2 minutes, which equals an astonishing one gigabyte every 24 seconds. **Barney Britton**



Micro verdict

If you shoot hundreds of images on a regular basis, these cards will save you time



For more information visit www.sandisk.co.uk

Forthcoming tests

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| NIK AF not D40/60 etc | £149 |
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Canon EOS 1000D vs Nikon D3000

The entry-level DSLR market is constantly changing, and **Nikon's** new **D3000** enters the fray against some stiff competition, including the **Canon EOS 1000D**. On paper these cameras should appeal to enthusiasts as well as beginners, but which is the best value?

Barney Britton
Technical Writer



someone jumping straight in at the professional level.

Canon and Nikon have impressive saturation in the entry-level market, despite increasingly stiff competition from Olympus, Pentax and Sony. The Canon EOS 1000D and new Nikon D3000 are two of the best-specified beginners' cameras available, but with both, their manufacturers have to tread a rather delicate line. As entry-level options, it is essential that neither camera should confuse a potential buyer with a plethora of obscurely named functions. On the other hand, a first-time DSLR buyer needs a camera that offers manual control and features sufficient to support his or her growing photographic ambitions. It is for this reason that entry-level DSLRs are equally appealing to experienced photographers who want a second

body to use alongside a heavier, tougher, high-end camera.

Features

Despite their entry-level billing, the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 are highly specified cameras. Both offer an effective resolution of just over ten million pixels, although the sensor technology is different: CCD from Nikon and CMOS from Canon. Both cameras use sensors that have been used before. The EOS 1000D's CMOS sensor is inherited from the EOS 450D, and the D3000 shares the same venerable sensor that was used in the D200, D80, D40x and D60. Despite this comparatively old technology, the EOS 1000D and D3000 are thoroughly modern cameras. Unlike the Nikon D3000, the EOS 1000D

Canon EOS 1000D
Entry-level DSLR



- 10.1 million effective pixels
- APS-C-sized CMOS sensor
- Canon EF mount
- 2.5in, 230,000-dot LCD screen
- Street price £309 (body only)

Nikon D3000
Entry-level DSLR



- 10.2 million effective pixels
- APS-C (DX-format) CCD sensor
- Nikon F mount
- 3in, 230,000-dot LCD screen
- Street price around £365 (body only)

THE entry-level segment of the digital SLR market is very competitive, because when a photographer buys a camera at the beginning of his or her photographic career, it is likely to be the first of many. Once the beginner DSLR photographer has added a couple of lenses to their collection, and maybe a flash, it is unlikely they will change systems. This means the manufacturer can almost guarantee a customer for life. Assuming such photographers behave according to the norm, a first-time DSLR buyer is worth a lot more to a camera manufacturer, therefore, than

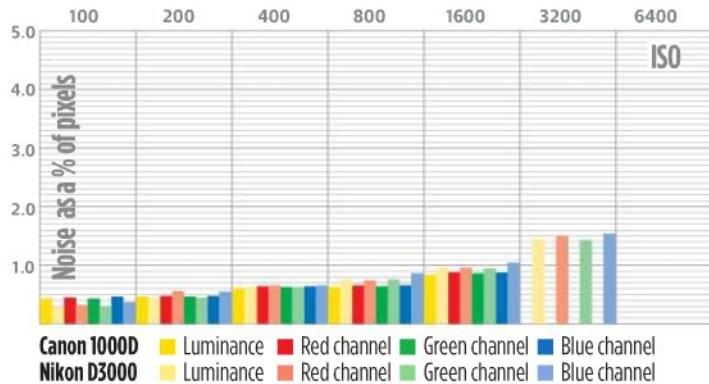
Resolution, noise and sensitivity

I am very impressed by the image quality of both cameras, and despite their relatively low (10MP) resolution, raw files from both cameras contain a huge amount of detail. Images from the Nikon D3000's CCD sensor are strikingly crisp, but they are matched in terms of detail resolution by files from the CMOS sensor of the EOS 1000D. The differences apparent from our resolution tests are unnoticeable in practical terms.

The difference between the standard JPEG output and raw is more pronounced in images from the Canon EOS 1000D. In JPEG mode, detail is lacking in low-contrast areas, but a lot can be recovered from the camera's CR2 raw files. The Nikon D3000's JPEGs are a slightly closer match for its NEF files, but considering

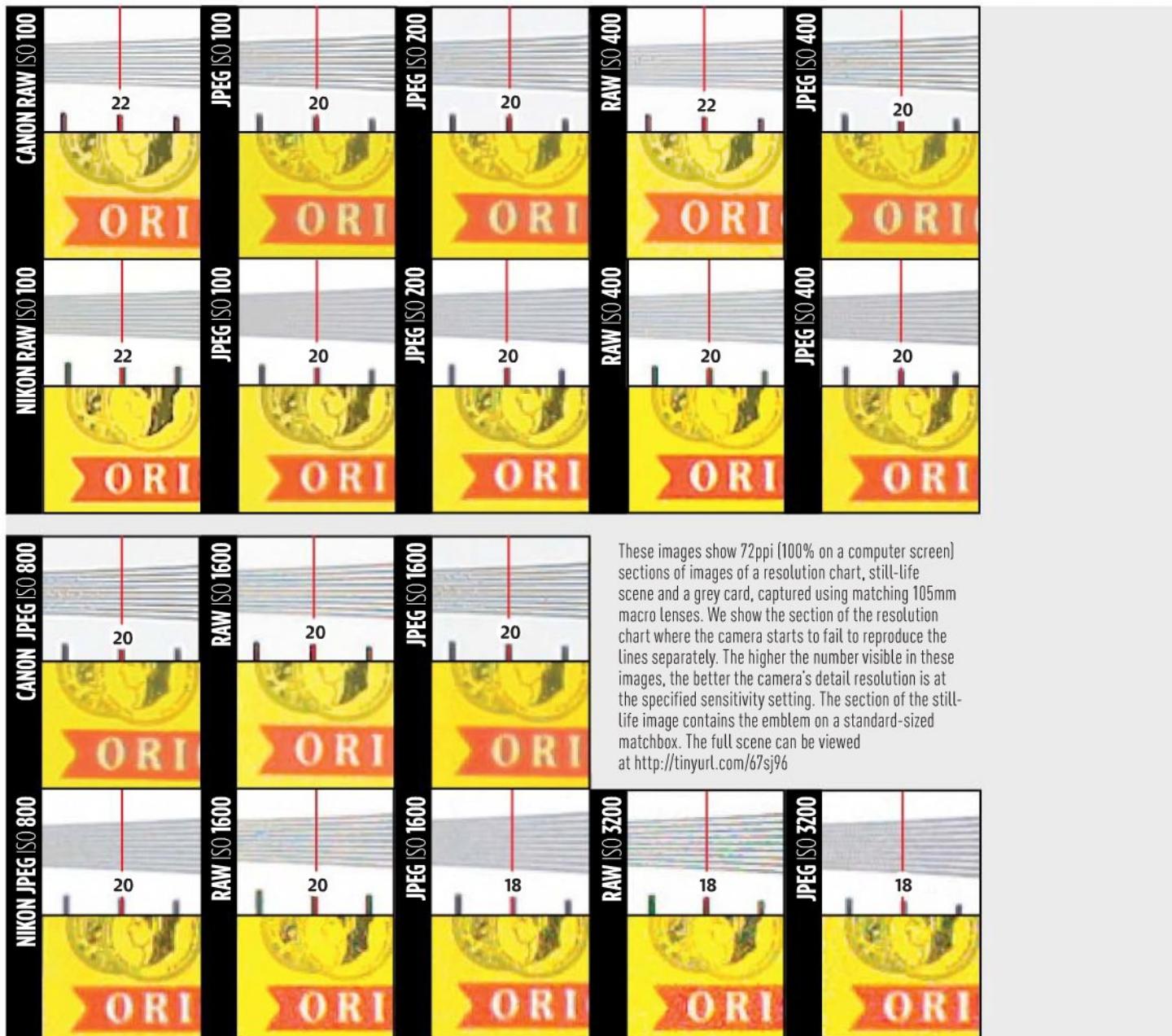
the market at which both cameras are aimed, both give very good performance.

Naturally, the bundled kit optics aren't the best match for either cameras' sensor, although the Nikon 18-55mm f/3.5 VR is still one of the best bundled options available, and apart from some mild colour fringing at the extremes of the frame, it offers excellent performance. In normal shooting conditions, both cameras offer very good noise performance, and both retain their ability to record fine detail throughout their ISO sensitivity range. The EOS 1000D's ISO sensitivity is capped at ISO 1600, but it is clear from the accompanying graphs that the sensor is still able to resolve a lot of detail. In 'real-world' shooting conditions, when the light gets low,



both cameras produce noisy files at ISO settings higher than 800. Of the two, I prefer the grittier noise of the D3000, compared to the slightly 'smudgier'

chroma noise of the EOS 1000D, but in prints smaller than A4 the difference between the noise performance of the two cameras is unnoticeable.



Data file

Focal points

Depth of field preview

The Canon EOS 1000D offers depth of field preview via a dedicated button close to the lens throat, but not so the Nikon D3000. Nikon omits this function from its entry-level DSLRs, and the D90 is the next model up in Nikon's product line to offer the feature.

'Airflow' dust reduction system

The Nikon D3000 offers Nikon's innovative 'airflow' system for keeping the mirrorbox and sensor clean. The action of the mirror moving up and down drives air into a circuit around the mirrorbox that directs small particles of dust into a 'trap' just in front of the mirror. Airflow works in tandem with conventional sensor-based dust reduction.

Bundled software

As always, Canon's supplied software package is excellent, and includes Digital Photo Professional, a very capable raw converter and image-manipulation program. Nikon's software package is more limited, but ViewNX is a much more capable raw converter than Picture Project, the last generation Nikon software, and will provide an excellent starting point for photographers new to raw capture.



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|---------------------------|---|--|
| RRP | £459.99 (body only) | £429.99 (body only) |
| Sensor | Canon CMOS with 10.1 million effective pixels | CCD with 10.2-million effective pixels |
| Output size | 3888x2592 pixels | 3872x2592 pixels |
| Focal length mag | 1.6x | 1.5x |
| Lens mount | Canon EF (EF-S compatible) | Nikon F |
| File size | Approx 9MB raw, 4.5MB JPEG on card | 9MB raw, 4.8MB JPEG on card |
| File format | Raw, JPEG (two levels of compression available), JPEG + raw simultaneously | Raw, JPEG (three levels of compression available), raw + JPEG (basic) simultaneously |
| Compression | Two-stage JPEG | Three-stage JPEG |
| Colour space | Adobe RGB, sRGB | Adobe RGB, sRGB |
| Shutter type | Electronically controlled focal-plane | Electronically controlled focal-plane shutter |
| Shutter speeds | 30-1/8000sec in 1/3 or 1/2 steps plus bulb | 30-1/4000sec in 1/3EV steps plus bulb |
| Max flash sync | 1/200sec default or 1/8000sec with compatible EX series Speedlites | 1/200sec |
| ISO | ISO 100-1600 in 1EV steps | ISO 100-1600 plus ISO 3200 'Hi' setting |
| Exposure modes | PASM, full auto, plus 6 scene presets | PASM, fully auto, plus 6 scene presets |
| Metering system | 35-zone evaluated, centreweighted, partial (10% approx) | 420-pixel 3D Color Matrix Metering II evaluative mode, centreweighted, spot (approx 2.5%) |
| Exposure comp | ±2EV in 1/3 or 1/2EV steps | ±5EV in 1/3EV steps |
| White balance | Auto, 6 presets, plus 1 custom setting and Kelvin adjustment | Auto, 6 presets, plus custom |
| WB bracket | 3 exposures with blue/amber or magenta/green bias | No |
| Dust reduction | Yes, EOS integrated cleaning system | Yes, Image Sensor Cleaning and 'Airflow' system |
| Drive mode | Single, continuous, (3fps for 514 JPEGs or 1.5fps for 5 raw files) | Max 3fps for unlimited JPEGs and around 6 raw files (default settings) |
| LCD | 2.7in TFT with 230,000 dots | 3in TFT with 230,000 pixels |
| Viewfinder type | Pentamirror | Pentamirror type |
| Field of view | Approx 95% | Approx 95% |
| Dioptre adjustment | -2 to +1 dioptre | -1.7 to +0.5 dioptre |
| Focusing modes | Manual, One Shot AF, AI Servo AF, AI Focus AF, contrast-detection AF in Live View mode | Manual, single-servo AF, continuous single-servo AF, and auto AF-S and AF-C selection (AF-A) |
| AF points | 7 points selectable individually or automatically in reflex mode, roaming-point in Live View mode | 11 AF points selected manually or automatically |
| Focusing screen | Standard Precision Matte | Type B BriteView Clear Matte screen Mark V with superimposed grid pattern |
| DoF preview | Yes | No |
| PC socket | No | No |
| Built-in flash | Yes, pop-up unit GN 13m @ ISO 100 | Yes, pop-up unit GN 12m @ ISO 100 |
| Cable release | No, optional remote release | No, optional remote release |
| Memory card | SD/SDHC | SecureDigital/MMC and SDHC |
| Power | Rechargeable Li-Ion battery (supplied) | Rechargeable Li-Ion battery (supplied) |
| Connectivity | USB 2.0 | USB 2.0 |
| Weight | 450g (without battery or card/s) | 485g (without battery or card/s) |
| Dimensions | 126.1x97.5x61.9mm | 126x64x97mm |



offers a versatile Live View function, which was, for a while, the most advanced that Canon offered across its entire line-up.

Both cameras offer multi-point autofocus systems, with 11 points in the case of the Nikon D3000 and seven points from the Canon EOS 1000D. Autofocus is by phase detection, which also allows AF tracking in both cameras. The Canon EOS 1000D's versatile Live View mode features two AF choices: either conventional phase detection, where the mirror is raised momentarily to expose the main AF sensor; or the more tripod-friendly contrast detection, which is slower but generally better for more critical work.

Although both the EOS 1000D and D3000 are designed to attract photographers new to DSLR photography, both offer a set of key features that will be familiar to much more experienced photographers. As well as the core PASM exposure modes, and the usual range of 'scene' presets, both allow full control over exposures via exposure compensation. The Canon EOS 1000D also provides exposure bracketing from ±2EV in 1/2EV steps, but the D3000, like its D40 and D60 predecessors, does not offer this feature. Something it does offer, however, is in-camera raw conversion, which is effectively a slimmed-down version of the conversion options available in Nikon's View NX software. Basic adjustments, like exposure and white balance, can be made to each file, and images are converted one by one, to take their place as JPEGs on the camera's memory card.

Build and handling

Both the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 are built to a price, but neither feels cheap. As their body shells are made entirely of plastic, it is no surprise that neither feels as solid, nor has the same heft, as a camera like the EOS 50D or Nikon D300s, but both are put together very well.

Ergonomically, the Canon EOS 1000D is the more conventional of the two cameras in DSLR terms, and the layout of the major control points will be immediately familiar to anyone who has used an EOS camera before. The Nikon D3000 is difficult to distinguish from the D5000, and apart from the fixed screen it offers a very similar handling experience. The only major departure from conventional Nikon-standard ergonomics in the D3000 is its new Guide mode. Located on the exposure mode dial alongside the familiar PASM and preset 'scene' shooting modes, Guide is essentially a



semi-automatic mode that is designed to guide the beginner photographer through the camera's functions and settings. It operates in Simple and Advanced modes, and in the latter, the photographer selects a desired effect from the Soften Backgrounds, Freeze Motion (People) and Freeze Motion (Vehicles) options. Once an option is selected, a new screen suggests using aperture or shutter priority respectively, and explains the effect of aperture and shutter speed settings on images. Experienced photographers will probably never use this mode because they won't need to, but it works well and may serve as an invaluable gateway into the D3000's more advanced features for a beginner. My only concern about Guide is that once the D3000 has directed you towards aperture/shutter priority, the settings are altered not using the rear control dial, as they would be normally, but with the up/down arrows on the multi-controller. It's not a serious problem, but it is confusing, especially for someone graduating to the manual exposure settings from Guide mode.

The Canon EOS 1000D has no equivalent to Nikon's Guide mode. This won't concern the experienced DSLR user, but it means there is no effective bridge between the various fully automatic shooting options and the PASM modes. The EOS 1000D isn't alone in this, as only Nikon and Sony have so far made significant efforts to demystify these modes for the benefit of novices, but it may prove to be a barrier for the first-time SLR user.

On the other hand, experienced SLR users may feel more comfortable with the Canon EOS 1000D than with the Nikon D3000 because there is no Guide mode. The screen-intensive handling of the latter helps to keep the camera body very 'clean', but it is an entirely different way of working to the more traditional button-heavy ergonomics of the EOS 1000D.

White balance and colour

The Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 are entry-level cameras, and as such, their respective target audience is likely to shoot JPEGs, at least until they become more experienced and graduate to raw capture. The auto white balance modes of both cameras can be relied upon to give natural-looking results in daylight, although interestingly, the Canon EOS 1000D displays a marked tendency to cool down images taken in warm afternoon and morning sunlight.

Nikon D3000 Miniature Effect



The Nikon D3000 features a range of retouching options, including raw conversion and a new Miniature Effect. Some people might dismiss it as a gimmick, but it works well and allows the plane of focus to be adjusted for the desired effect. This effect can be replicated in Photoshop, but having it available in-camera adds an extra dimension – as well as fun – to shooting with the D3000.

This can lead to images looking rather 'refrigerated' and in some of my pictures delicate blue skies are almost cyan as a result. The Nikon D3000 is better at preserving the atmosphere of images taken in daylight, but the line between 'nice and warm' and 'too warm' is a thin one, and care should be taken, especially with the positively toasty 'cloudy' white balance preset. In artificial light, neither camera is especially good at neutralising the tricky fluorescent colour cast, although the D3000's AWB system is very good at reducing the orange cast caused by tungsten lighting. The Canon EOS 1000D, on the other hand, leaves the orange in, which preserves the atmosphere of what is a very warm type of lighting, but it can have the effect of making human subjects look like they've fallen asleep on a sunbed.

As well as white balance presets, both the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 feature a range of colour modes (Canon calls them Picture Styles, Nikon labels them Picture Controls) that are designed to give different colour rendition to suit different types of subject. One part of Canon's excellent bundled software suite that is often overlooked is the versatile Picture Style Editor, which allows the existing presets to be fine-tuned and new ones created.

Metering

Generally, the multi-pattern metering systems of modern DSLRs are so reliable that it is a challenge to find anything notable to report in the metering section of AP's tests. When comparing the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000, however, I was presented with some interesting results that highlight very clearly the different ways in which the respective metering systems are designed to operate.

The Canon EOS 1000D is designed – in common with most Canon DSLRs for many years – to deliver bright midtones, which produce bright, punchy prints straight from the camera. In scenes of a more or less uniform luminance, the EOS 1000D gives noticeably brighter results than the Nikon D3000, which tends to produce darker midtones. This slightly darker bias helps to protect highlights, but it can in turn mean that darker midtones and shadow areas lose detail. Interestingly, though, in their respective evaluative metering modes both the EOS 1000D and D3000 use the active AF point to determine correct exposure. Even if neither camera is actually moved, therefore, focusing on a bright object results in a darker exposure than when the active AF point is shifted to a darker area. Even so, the Canon EOS

1000D still tends to deliver brighter results than the D3000, which is consistently better at preserving highlights. Although it doesn't always give the most natural-looking results, I have found that the best way to get the maximum tonal spread from the D3000's JPEG files in scenes that contain very light and very dark areas is to switch Active D-Lighting on.

Dynamic range

The dynamic range of both the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 is roughly the same, at around 12EV. This represents excellent performance. Nikon's Active D-Lighting is very effective at optimising the D3000's dynamic range, and with both cameras, shooting in raw mode gives very good scope for exposure adjustments post-capture.

Viewfinder, LCD and Live View

The D3000's 3in screen is a little larger than the 2.5in screen of the EOS 1000D, and although an increase of $\frac{1}{2}$ in on the diagonal might seem trifling, it does make a positive difference to the handling experience. Ironically, the EOS 1000D, which has the smaller screen, offers Live View, for which as large a screen as possible is desirable for comfortable use.

In general use, there is little to separate the experience of using the screens of either camera, except what is displayed on them. However, the larger surface area of the D3000's screen,

GG The dynamic range of both the EOS 1000D and the D3000 is roughly the same, at around 12EV. This represents excellent performance JJ

Features in use

Nikon Active D-Lighting vs Canon Auto Lighting Optimiser

BOTH the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 feature tools designed to make the most out of the dynamic range of their sensors. Here, I'll take a look at their effect.

Nikon's Active D-Lighting

Active D-Lighting (ADL) has been a feature of Nikon's DSLRs for some time, and in simple terms it is designed to deliver the maximum possible detail in the entire tonal range of an image. This means that when Active D-Lighting is turned on, the Nikon D3000 will aim to record an image where as little detail as possible is 'blocked up' in the dark areas, or 'burnt out' in the highlights. Unlike more advanced DSLRs like the D300s, which offers several ADL levels, in the D3000 the feature is either 'on' or 'off'.

When presented with a scene like this, where the building and trees are of a significantly darker tone than the sky, ADL has managed to produce an HDR-like effect by selectively brightening the midtone and shadow areas while at the same time pulling the highlights back, and darkening the clouds, which are the brightest part of the image. A quick glance at the metadata of the two images shows that the picture taken with ADL turned on was captured at 1/250sec at f/10, compared to 1/125sec at the same aperture when it was turned off. This shows that the D3000 has underexposed by -1EV to preserve highlight detail, and the ADL system has then boosted the midtone and shadow areas to match the general tonal spread of the 'correct' exposure.

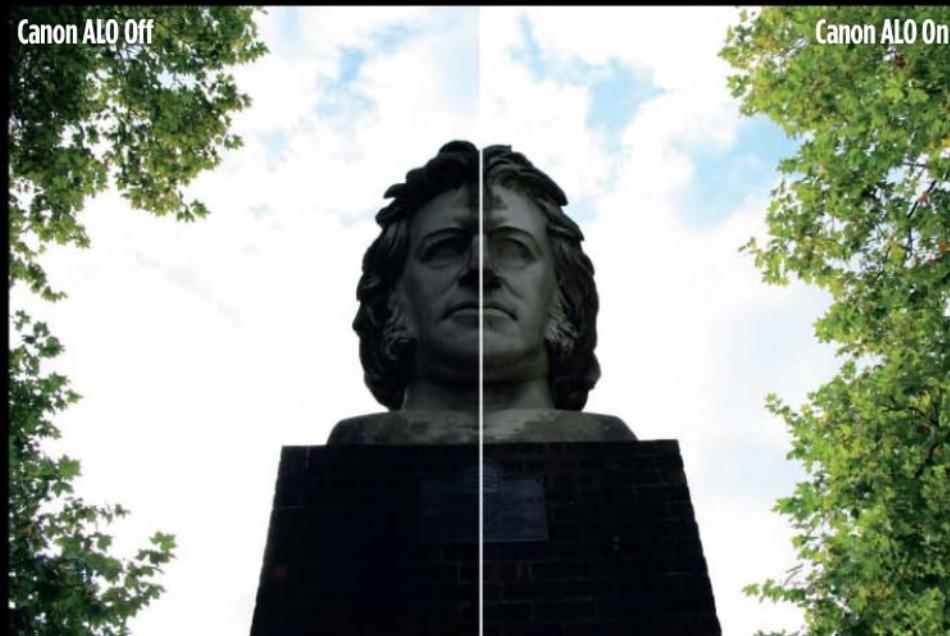
Canon's Auto Lighting Optimiser

Auto Lighting Optimiser (ALO) is turned on by default and is designed, according to Canon, to 'boost brightness and contrast to produce more pleasing results'. Unlike Nikon's Active D-Lighting, it is mainly intended to correct for underexposure, of the sort that might be caused, for example, when a dark subject is captured against a bright background. It also incorporates a face-detection feature that is designed to correct for underexposure in portraits.

In previous tests of both the Canon EOS 1000D and other Canon DSLRs, we have complained that the effects of ALO are subtle to the point of being unnoticeable, and much of the time this is true. Even in environments where I would expect a system of this sort to produce a noticeable difference to an image's histogram, ALO stubbornly refuses to do very much. In fact, apart from a slight brightening of a very selective band of midtones, it is often impossible to tell that the function is even turned on. However, when I pointed the camera at a large carved-stone bust against a bright, cloudy backdrop, the EOS 1000D gave me a dramatically brighter image than the Nikon D3000 without any exposure compensation. It seems that ALO picked up on the 'face' and applied a levels adjustment to brighten it. Sadly, however, unlike the file from the D3000, highlight detail is almost non-existent.



The Nikon D3000's Active D-Lighting function can have a profound effect on the tonal range it is possible to capture in a single exposure, as can be seen in this image. Highlight detail has been recovered, and midtones brightened



Canon's Auto Lighting Optimiser has a subtle effect in normal use, but can help to prevent detail loss by silhouetting, as can be seen here, where a lot of detail has been recovered in the face of this statue that is backlit against the sky

In conclusion

In the Canon EOS 1000D, Auto Lighting Optimiser is turned on by default and I see no reason to turn it off. Unfortunately, because the metering system of the EOS 1000D delivers such bright midtones, highlight detail is very easily lost in images from this camera, and ALO does

little to prevent it. Nikon's Active D-Lighting, on the other hand, can really help to rescue both highlight and shadow detail in JPEGs. The penalty is in processing time. With ADL turned on, the D3000 takes a couple of seconds to process the images, which reduces the camera's buffer and slows review time.



and Nikon's decision to increase the size of the text significantly in the menus and Guide mode, means that it has a more user-friendly feel, compared to the EOS 1000D's screen, which can feel cramped.

Both the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 use pentamirror rather than pentaprism viewfinders. Pentamirrors are lighter and cheaper than solid prisms, but tend to be a little dimmer. This is unnoticeable in use, and considering that both cameras are aimed at the lower end of the DSLR market I am pleased with the size and clarity of the viewfinders. It is noticeable that the Nikon D3000's viewfinder gives a much warmer colour rendition than the somewhat cool viewfinder of the EOS 1000D, but this is only apparent in direct comparison. Since warm colour rendition is a feature of all current Nikon DSLRs, it could be caused by the LED layer sandwiched against the focusing screen. This layer displays both the active focusing points and on-demand gridlines for aiding composition. With the EOS 1000D switched to Live View, two AF modes are available, and a powerful 10x screen magnification option ensures accurate manual focusing in Live View mode. The D3000's screen is limited to menu navigation and image review only, but as has been previously noted it is slightly larger than that of the EOS 1000D.

Autofocus

Traditionally, entry-level cameras offer a fairly limited autofocus system to keep costs down. This is not the case with either the EOS 1000D or

Canon EOS 1000D



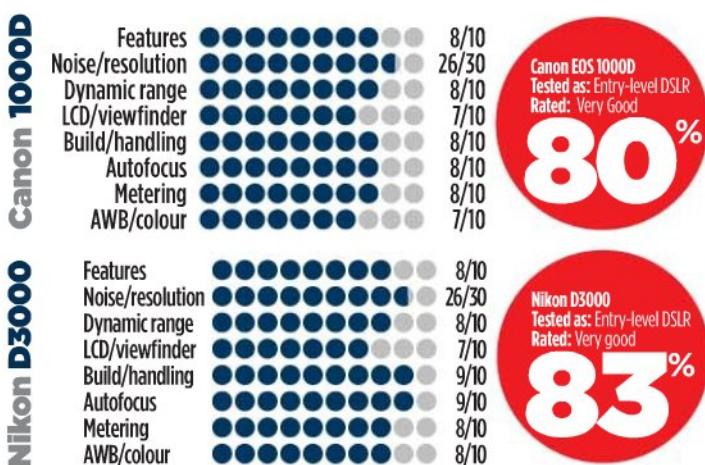
Our verdict

THE differences between the Canon EOS 1000D and Nikon D3000 are many and varied, but in the final analysis, both are excellent cameras that have a lot to offer the beginner and enthusiast photographer, although they operate in rather different ways. The Canon EOS 1000D is an entry-level camera in a more traditional mould, and

includes a complete feature set in a low-cost body, but apart from the various fully automatic scene modes it makes virtually no concessions to someone new to SLR photography. The Nikon D3000, on the other hand, takes the semi-explanatory, user-friendly graphic user interface (GUI) of its predecessors, the D40, D40x and D60, and makes it

even more explanatory and even friendlier. The D3000's Guide mode is a genuinely useful bridge between the fully automatic presets and full manual control, and I hope that Nikon continues to develop it.

In terms of critical image quality, the D3000 and EOS 1000D are fairly evenly matched, and I have taken the opportunity to slightly adjust the original noise/resolution scores of both cameras to reflect the fact that their sensors are on a par, in practical terms. Images from both cameras are of a very high standard, especially when captured in raw mode, and yet again, Canon deserves praise for bundling its excellent Digital Photo Professional software with the EOS 1000D as part of its superb supplied software suite. Which is the better camera is, as always, a matter of subjective opinion, but putting myself in the mindset of a first-time DSLR buyer I would say that despite the omission of Live View, the Nikon D3000 offers a more compelling set of features, in combination with more novice-friendly ergonomics.



D3000. The Nikon D3000 actually features the same Multi-CAM 1000 AF module as the D90, which allows the camera to operate in 3D Tracking mode. In this mode, when AF is set to Continuous, all the 11 AF points are activated and work together to track subjects across the AF array. To enable this system to work, Nikon has equipped the D3000 with a variant

of the innovative Scene Recognition System first introduced in the professional D3 and D300 in 2007.

The Canon EOS 1000D has a seven-point AF system, and like the D3000 the active AF point can be selected either manually or automatically by the camera. As with all EOS DSLRs, any Canon EF lens ever made since the inception of the

system in 1987 will fit and function perfectly on the EOS 1000D. The Nikon D3000, on the other hand, cannot achieve automatic focus with older Nikon lenses that lack an AF-S or AF-I motor. Unfortunately this encompasses the vast majority of Nikon optics made before the millennium. All AF-D and many older lenses will still fit, and can be used when the aperture ring is locked to its automatic position, which is marked in red. However, focusing is manual only, and with lenses that lack an automatic aperture setting, metering is disabled, too.

When shooting with the two cameras side by side, the differences between their respective phase-detection AF systems become clear. Although both are perfectly capable when faced with static subjects in bright light, the Nikon D3000 is noticeably superior in darker conditions. The Canon EOS 1000D's AF is by no means poor, but the Nikon D3000 is unusual in offering such an advanced system in an entry-level body. When tracking a moving subject, the D3000 offers the same impressive accuracy as its higher-level peers, the D5000 and D90. Although I have the impression that it is more capable than its predecessors, the Canon EOS 1000D doesn't quite match up in its AI-Servo AF mode, even with a fast-aperture LUSM lens fitted. **AP**

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All-purpose compact

Ian Platt asks I don't use my Nikon Coolpix 4800 for exhibition-quality photography because the results aren't good enough. Is there a compact camera on the market with a significantly larger sensor that also has a zoom lens with 35mm equivalent focal lengths of approximately 28-135mm, an optical viewfinder and a monitor?

Richard Sibley replies There isn't currently a single compact camera that has all the features you require. The Sigma DP2 and Leica X1 both feature APS-C format sensors, but both have fixed focal-length lenses and lack in-built optical viewfinders.

The Olympus E-P1 has an interchangeable lens mount and an optional VF-1 optical viewfinder is available specifically for use with Olympus's 17mm (34mm equivalent) pancake lens.

I would also recommend that you take a look at the Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF1, which, like the E-P1, has a Four Thirds-format sensor and interchangeable lenses, while an electronic viewfinder is available separately. The body itself is small, but as soon as you add a lens like the Leica D Vario-Elmar 14-50mm f/3.8-5.6 Asph Mega OIS (28-100mm equivalent) its bulk increases considerably. This is the paradox: the quality that you want to achieve isn't currently possible in a truly 'compact' camera kit.

Of the more 'traditional' compact cameras, the new Canon PowerShot G11 has a larger sensor than most. It also features an optical viewfinder and 28-140mm equivalent focal length lens. Look out for a full review in a future issue of AP.



www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/qa
More questions & answers available at...

Film to digital

Adrian Lewis asks I am obtaining wonderfully atmospheric and gritty digital black & white images by exposing Fujicolor Neopan 1600 black & white film at ISO 6400, and then having a commercial company push-process the film and scan it onto a high-quality CD. Since sharpening makes up for the inadequacies of images captured by digital sensors, am I right in thinking that images captured on film, which do not suffer these sharpness inadequacies, do not need sharpening after being scanned onto digital media?

Richard Sibley replies I understand why you might think that Adrian, but your assumption isn't entirely correct. Typically, scanners use CCD sensor technology, which is also used in many digital cameras. Although the implementation is very different, the images created by a CCD scanner, just like a picture from a digital camera, requires some sharpening in order to optimise the definition of detail.

As for getting your images scanned at a commercial lab, most high street labs use fast, relatively cheap batch scanners, which are

likely to apply a certain amount of sharpening by default, unless you specifically instruct it to be turned off. In my experience, a lot of labs tend to oversharpen scans, so it's worth asking for it to be turned off and perform the sharpening yourself once you have the files on your computer. Many professional laboratories still offer drum scanning, which takes longer, and costs a lot more, but results in appreciably better image quality. A drum scan is likely to be sharper from the word go, and therefore require little or no sharpening post-capture.

TZ6 vs TZ7 vs TZ65

Mike Mallon asks I want to buy a high-spec compact digital camera and had settled upon either the Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ6 or Lumix DMC-TZ7. Then, in my local branch of Currys, I saw an advert for a Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ65 digital camera that looks identical to the TZ6 and TZ7 models, and appears to have a similar specification.

Unfortunately, the staff at the store were unable to explain the difference between the three models, and my attempts to discover more information about the TZ65 through other retailers, the internet and Panasonic proved fruitless. Could you, therefore, shed some light on the TZ65 before I commit to any purchase?

Richard Sibley replies The Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ65 is exclusive to the Dixons retail group, which consists of Dixons, Currys and PC World. It shares the same sensor and specification as the TZ6, but has the larger 3in screen of the TZ7. If the extra video capabilities of the TZ7 do not appeal to you, but the slightly larger screen does, then the TZ65 might be a good choice. If the larger screen and video are not essential, then opt for the TZ6 and save yourself a few pounds.

Olympus in colour

Chris Harning asks With all the hype surrounding the size of the new Olympus E-P1, I found myself wanting to dig out my old Olympus XA-2 35mm camera. I was surprised at just how small it is and have recently been using it while travelling. Not that I would ever dream of selling it, but how much would an XA-2 cost to buy now?

Richard Sibley replies Olympus XA cameras are still highly popular, although they don't command huge prices. If your XA2 is in very good

FAQ

Frequently Asked Question

When entering a photographic competition or submitting images to online galleries or websites, you should read the terms and conditions carefully.

'Rights grabbing' is a phrase that is used to describe a set of terms and conditions that contain a clause allowing the organisers of a competition or website to

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Your questions answered



USB problems

Andypandy asks I have an elevated photography rig with a 70ft (21.3m) mast. I'm using USB to ethernet cable at the camera end, and a 70ft ethernet and then ethernet to USB at the laptop end. When the remote window comes up I have a few seconds to view the image remotely and then the connection fails. My laptop tells me that I should check my camera or leads for a disconnection, but they are fine. I do get a warning that my USB ports are 1.1 and I should use 2.0, so I bought a CardBus adapter combo USB 2.0 and IEEE1394a, which is supposed to convert USB 1.1 to 2.0, but it doesn't seem to make any difference. I would also add that the CardBus has a slot for a power adapter, although it didn't come with one, so does it need this power or is it optional?

deddard replies The whole idea of USB to ethernet is that ethernet devices tend to be powered, and can therefore cope with distances. A USB cable has a maximum recommended length of three metres (although it can be pushed further) and what you are effectively doing is just creating a long USB cable if there is no external power.

Have a look round for boosted cables, either ethernet adapters or USB. Try searching for mast photography, or specialist video suppliers. An alternative would be security camera suppliers, as they use USB cameras to ethernet quite a bit.

Richard Sibley replies Deddard is correct. I have used a 5m USB cable between a camera and laptop computer, but for distances greater than this additional power is required to help boost the signal. Try to find a suitable power supply for your CardBus adapter.

condition and with a working example of the A11 flash, you could expect to get anything between £20 and £50, though most likely at the cheaper end of this scale.

The exceptions to this are the coloured versions of the XA2. Olympus produced red, blue and white (light grey) versions of the XA-2 and these command higher values as they are less common. Expect to pay



between £50 and £100 for a coloured version, depending on the condition of the camera.

use images with no benefit or recognition to the originating photographer.

Most competitions have a clause stating that images submitted may be used for promotional purposes, which is fair enough if you are being credited, particularly if yours is the winning image. However, some terms and conditions go a step further and allow the organiser to use your images in any way they see fit without any payment or even acknowledgement to the photographer. Beware of any terms and conditions that ask you to waive your moral rights to an image or that grant a company permission to license your image to others.

This can allow someone to use your image as they see fit and even to profit from it.

It is up to individuals to decide whether or not they agree with the terms and conditions of a competition, and whether the benefits and glory of winning outweigh any negatives. However, we would strongly suggest that you do not enter a contest that allows the organiser to license your image.

For more information on how to interpret the terms and conditions of photography competitions, and to see a list of recommended competitions and those to avoid, see www.pro-imaging.org.
Richard Sibley

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW SPENCER FOR AP

A major exhibition celebrating 19th century photography is about to open at the British Library. **Gemma Padley** had a sneak peek behind the scenes

An inspiration to all

We talk to **John Hedgecoe**, the man who sparked a photographic interest in thousands of enthusiasts

Samsung WB550

The Samsung WB550 is one of a new breed of 'travel compacts' that combines versatility with a small, portable package. **Barney Britton** asks, does it succeed?

THE Samsung WB550 is a 12.2-million-pixel compact digital camera with a 10x zoom lens, covering 24–240mm (equivalent). Two stabilisation modes are included: optical, where an element in the lens shifts to counter the effects of camera shake, and digital. At the wideangle setting of the lens the maximum aperture is f/3.3, which decreases to f/5.8 at its telephoto extent. Exposure is principally automatic, although a token 'M' mode is included alongside the 'P' mode and the usual range of scene presets. I say token because the WB550's lens can only operate at two aperture values at any given focal length, so exposure control is effectively limited to changing the shutter speed.

Despite a very limited manual exposure option, it is possible to take full control over exposure in the automatic modes with exposure compensation (±2EV) and a choice of three metering modes: spot, centreweighted and evaluative. A lot of control is also offered over colour rendition, and alongside a range of Photo Styles, such as soft, vivid, forest, retro and cool, are colourising and fine-tuning options for saturation, contrast and sharpness. The WB550 does not offer a raw capture mode, but the amount of control possible over JPEG capture should be enough to keep most enthusiast photographers happy. As well as

still images, the WB550 can also capture video footage, at 1280x720p resolution at up to 30fps.

Build and handling

The Samsung WB550 is built to a high standard, in common with all of Samsung's top-end compact digital cameras. The body shell is semi-gloss metal, and the whole package feels very well put together and reassuringly heavy. Despite its wide focal-length range, the WB550's lens is reasonably flush to the body when the camera is turned off, and doesn't extend too far in use. Some ultra-zoom cameras can feel rather unbalanced when their lenses are racked out all the way, but the WB550 remains a reasonably compact camera at all settings.

The lens is zoomed with a switch around the shutter release, and all other functions are set using control points on the rear of the camera. A rather sharp rocker switch in the thumb rest position can be customised for quick access to certain key settings, such as white balance and ISO sensitivity, although in use this control point is awkward and rather too small for comfortable operation.

Performance

The WB550's autofocus, white balance and metering systems are reliable and accurate, although like

many Samsung digital compact cameras, colour rendition is rather cool. The large LCD screen remains impressively easy to use, even in direct sunlight. The 10x zoom lens can't match more conservative optics like those featured in the Ricoh GR Digital III or Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX3 for quality, but sharpness is almost uniform across the frame at both the wide and telephoto ends. Fringing is well controlled, although moderate barrel distortion can be seen at the wide end of the 24–240mm zoom lens. I suspect that clever in-camera processing is responsible for the low level of fringing, but still, it's the result that counts.

Unfortunately, where the WB550 falls down is image quality. Even at ISO 80, images have an over-processed, 'digital' appearance, and noise is visible throughout the ISO sensitivity range, increasing to objectionable levels beyond ISO 400. The camera's attempts to reduce it are moderately successful, but lead to a loss of fine detail. At ISO 1600, images are good for little more than 7x5in prints, but at lower ISO settings and normal viewing distances the WB550 can produce decent results at A4.

Verdict

The Samsung WB550 is a neat little camera with a very versatile zoom



At a glance

- 12.2-million-pixel CCD sensor
- 10x optical zoom (24–240mm equivalent)
- 3in LCD screen
- ISO 80–1600 (ISO 3200 at 3MP)
- Street price £219.99

lens that will no doubt appeal to photographers looking for a 'go everywhere' option. So long as they are realistic about their image-quality requirements, the WB550 will serve them very well, but anyone expecting DSLR quality will be disappointed.

Despite its refined handling and luxurious styling, images are noisy and lack the detail I would have expected, even at low ISO settings in high-contrast scenes. For small prints and online use, the WB550 is perfect, and its advanced specification and innovative features like smile and blink detection are fun and effective. However, when examined critically, image quality is poor

compared to competitive cameras such as the Ricoh CX2 and Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ7. **AP**



Data file

Samsung UK Ltd, Samsung House, 1,000 Hillswood Drive, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 0PS
Tel: 01932 455 000. Web: www.samsung.com/uk

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| RRP | £379.99 |
| Sensor | 12.2 million effective pixels |
| Output size | 3648x2736 pixels |
| Lens | 24–240mm (equivalent) f/3.3–5.8 |
| ISO | ISO 80–1600 (plus ISO 3200 at 3MP resolution) |
| Exposure modes | Auto, program, manual, plus 15 scene presets |
| Exposure metering | Matrix, centreweighted, spot, metering |
| White balance | Auto, 5 presets, plus custom |
| LCD | 3in LCD with 460,000 pixels |
| AF modes | Centre AF, Multi AF, Selection AF, Manual Focus, Face Detection AF |
| Memory card | Secure Digital/MMC |
| Power | Rechargeable Lithium-Ion |
| Weight | 219g |
| Dimensions | 105x61.4x36.5mm |



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Lencarta Safari 600 ring flash kit

It offers a middle ground between extremely expensive studio ring flashes and cheaper, less powerful adapters, but **Richard Sibley** finds out whether the **Lencarta Safari 600 ring flash** can create a perfect portrait

RING flashes will always be a staple of macro photography, but the distinctive look of the light they produce also makes them popular among portrait photographers. Sadly, smaller ring flashes designed for macro photography generally aren't strong enough for portrait images, and the larger units are too expensive for the average amateur.

Lencarta has come up with a



solution to this problem in the form of its Safari 600 ring flash kit, which offers the power output needed for portraits and outdoor images, but at a significantly lower price than similar offerings from Bowens and Elinchrom.

Further adding to the Lencarta model's appeal is the fact that the power pack for the ring flash can also be used to power the firm's own Safari 600 flash head, making it the basis of a fully portable studio flash kit.

Features

There are three parts to the Safari 600 ring flash kit: the ring flash itself, a bracket and the power supply. The kit can be stored neatly in the supplied hard case, making it easy to transport.

The ring flash is a simple design that relies on an external power pack to control its (maximum) 600-joule power output. This means that the ring flash has a powerful guide number

At a glance

- 600 joule output
- Portable powerpack
- £724.95 (list price)



Lencarta Safari powerpack heads

IT'S not just the Lencarta Safari 600 ring flash that is compatible with the power pack. The company also produces the Safari 600 flash head, which has the same 600-joule power output as the ring flash. Made of sheet metal, the heads are strong

The key light for this image was a Safari 600 flash head to the left of the subject. To help soften any harsh shadows the ring flash was also used straight on

and well built, but also small and lightweight.

The Safari heads must be used with the power pack and cannot be plugged into the mains. There are no controls on the heads themselves, other than a power switch, and the power is controlled from the pack.

One disadvantage is that the power of individual lights cannot be controlled, so both have the same power output. I found this quite restrictive when trying to use different

of 70m @ ISO 100. Powered by a 3,000mAh rechargeable battery, the power pack will, Lencarta claims, allow for 1,150 flashes from a single three-hour charge, and with a sync trigger of just 5V it should be safe to use with all modern DSLR cameras.

Build and handling

Attaching the ring flash to a camera is straightforward. The bracket first screws into either side of the ring

lighting ratios for a key and fill light. However, in most cases I managed to get around the issue by moving one of the light sources further away.

Only a standard reflector is supplied with each head, but the heads accept standard Bowens S-fit accessories, and there is a huge range of these available, including softboxes, umbrellas, snoots and beauty dishes.

Individual heads costs £184.95, or various kits are available. The most basic of these kits includes two Safari flash heads, the power pack and a carry bag, and costs £903.65. Simply add some lighting stands to create a fully portable lighting kit.

flash, and then is secured to the camera via the camera tripod mount. A series of knurled, wheeled bolts allows the bracket and ring flash to be manoeuvred back and forth so it can be precisely adjusted to fit your camera combination.

Once attached, the ring flash can be plugged into one of two sockets on the power supply. With only a power output dial and test button there is little to control – the only feature of the power pack is an illuminated battery-life indicator.

If you are an event-photographer and feel that 1,150 flashes may not be enough, an additional battery can be bought separately for £99.95. Fitting the new battery is a case of opening the compartment, lifting the old one out and dropping the new one in. It can only be fitted one way and gravity ensures that all the connections are securely made. Finally, close the compartment door to hold the battery firmly in place.

A standard PC flash sync lead may be used to fire the flash and must be connected to the camera and power pack. A three-metre sync lead is supplied. Alternatively, a basic wireless, battery-powered radio trigger is supplied, for shooting with greater freedom.

In all, the power unit is larger than a Quantum battery pack, but it is far smaller and lighter than a Bowens or Elinchrom studio power pack. Measuring 20x25x11.4cm and weighing 4.8kg, the power pack is easy to carry and use over the shoulder when supported by the supplied strap. Having said that, if you plan on being in one location for a while, it would probably be best to place the pack on the ground to prevent your shoulders from aching.

Performance

I was very impressed with the power and colour output from the Safari 600 ring flash. In a



Using a ring flash off-camera

HERE is an unmistakable look to portraits illuminated using a ring flash. The distinctive catchlights in the subject's eyes and the clinical, shadowless, washed-out faces were popular in fashion photography during the 1990s, but they are now starting to look somewhat dated.

However, a ring flash doesn't have to be wrapped around a lens for a 'rabbit-caught-in-the-headlights' portrait. There is nothing to stop

it being used off camera as a soft, directional light source.

In the image on the left, the ring flash was placed about three feet from the subject, just above eye level, and angled slightly down. Although the light is directional, the shadows are still far softer than using a standard directional bare flash bulb and reflector.

Lencarta makes an optional diffuser for its Safari ring flash, which softens and diffuses the light and allows for the use of coloured lighting gels.



I used the Safari 600 ring flash straight-on to the subject for this shot, and although the familiar halo shadow is visible, the catchlights are points rather than rings

small studio environment I barely moved the power output above the minimum and still managed to shoot half-length portraits at ISO 100 with an aperture of f/8. Recycling times were also quite fast, with it taking around two seconds to recharge the capacitor to fire again.

Colour temperature was also very good. Lencarta rates it at between 5,200K and 5,500K, depending on power output and how warm the flash tube is. I found that the colour was consistent throughout my shoot, and reasonably neutral. It needed slight adjustment in Adobe Camera Raw, but this was simple as I took the images against a white background. I'd recommend taking a custom white balance reading or making sure that you have an image at the beginning of each sequence that has a white balance card in shot. **AP**

Data file

Lencarta, Blue Dimensions International Ltd, 5 King Street, Woodmansey, Beverley, East Yorkshire HU17 0TE. Tel: 0845 618 2889.
Website: www.lencarta.com

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| RRP | £724.95 |
| Power output | 600W/s – full power down to 1/16. GN 70.7m @ ISO 100 |
| Modelling lamp | No |
| Colour temp | 5,200-5,500K |
| Recycling time | 2secs at full-power |
| Sync voltage | Less than 5V (digital camera safe) |
| Radio receiver | Yes, basic radio trigger |
| Built-in slave | Yes |
| Accessory fitting | Bowens S |
| Included kit | Safari battery generator with battery, Safari ring flash head with brackets, 'Pelican'-style case, battery charger, radio trigger, sync lead, carrying strap for generator |

Our verdict

LENCARTA'S Safari 600 ring flash really is an excellent alternative to far more expensive studio versions. While it may be more expensive than the flash adapter alternatives, it has much more power.

The power supply accounts for a significant proportion of the cost of this kit, and when purchased separately the pack costs £514.95, while the ring flash is £239.95. However, it is the power pack that makes the Safari 600 range so appealing.

Being able to add the Safari 600

heads and use the kit as a truly portable studio flash kit makes it a fantastic option for those who want to try their hand at taking studio-type shots outside. Plus, the Bowens S fit makes all sorts of accessories available.

There are a few tweaks I would like to see, such as adjustable power for each flash, but on the whole it is a good simple solution.

At £724.95, this kit is not going to top everyone's purchase list, but those who do buy it should not be disappointed.



Roger Hicks

WOULD TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS ALL DAY, EVERY DAY, BECOME TEDIOUS? WE ALL NEED VARIETY IN OUR LIVES...



ROGER HICKS is a much-published author on photography. He has written more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife, Frances Schultz. Roger started photography as a teenager in the 1960s and worked professionally in a London advertising studio in the mid-1970s. He has been a freelance photographer/writer since 1981, contributing to many photography magazines, including 'Shutterbug' in America. Visit his website at www.rogerandfrances.com.

VARIETY is the spice of life. It's a clichéd saying, but it's true. Doing the same thing all day, every day, is tedious. It's even more tedious when it's backbreaking labour for subsistence farming, but I doubt many AP readers are subsistence farmers. Most of us are lucky enough to live in a world that is, by historical standards, almost unbelievably safe, secure and easy. If you don't believe me, try to imagine life, say, 500 years ago. Even so, we get bored. Now imagine you could devote all day, every day, to photography. Within reason, you can use whatever gear you like. It's clearly more enjoyable than subsistence farming, but even then, it can pall.

A lot depends on your subject matter and your temperament, of course. When I was an assistant in the 1970s, I remember working with someone whose job it was to photograph custom cars draped with pretty girls in various states of undress. After one particularly difficult shoot, we were having a glass of wine in the office of the owner of the studio. There were just three of us: him, the owner and me; no models, clad or otherwise. He shook his head and said, 'This job is so ****ing boring. The same old rubbish, week after week. And the ****ing cars are no better.'

I've always thought the same about portrait photography, and indeed most kinds of glamour. I know there are people who love the subtle variations of lighting, pose and expression that are possible in either realm, but I suspect that you have to be something of a monomaniac to do so. There's nothing wrong with monomania in photography. In fact, it's probably the shortest route to the top. It's just that I don't have it.

General advertising offered a lot more variety, not least because it can require a considerable amount of mental agility to translate an art director's rough into something that can be photographed. It was fun in the 1970s, when there was a lot more money and wine around, but I'd hate to be doing it now, with straitened budgets and drinking mineral water. And even in the 1970s, I didn't want to do it all the time. As well as taking pictures, I'd read, write and ride my motorcycle. Much as I do now, come to think of it.

The other thing I did, and still do, is to try to do a certain amount of mechanical work: repairing or restoring old cameras or working on my Land Rover. There are three reasons I do this. One is because it gets things fixed cheaply and (sometimes) well: at least I know what's been done. The second is that there is a satisfaction in making something work that previously did not work. And the third is that it is quite a contrast to the spontaneity of taking pictures: there is quite a

lot of meticulous and dexterous work involved.

This third point is all the more important, now that most of our colour photography is either digital, or lab-processed and scanned. In the days

There's nothing wrong with monomania in photography. In fact, it's probably the shortest route to the top. It's just that I don't have it

when I shot more slides there was more manual work, although we still do our black & white in the traditional way.

Quite apart from the variety that this introduces, there's also the important point that there is a limit to how many pictures I can deal with in a day, especially on the computer or on the light table. There is more, after all, to full-time photography than just taking pictures: you have to process them (whether in the darkroom or on the computer), sort them, store them and find uses for them. After a while I get 'pictured out' and lose my enthusiasm. The pictures all start to look dull and boring: I can see their faults far more easily than their merits.

Of course, most of them do have faults, but then, so do most of the pictures we all take. The trick lies in seeing which are the best, or the least worst, and trying to learn from them. When you can't do that, it is time to try to sort out the latest niggling little job on the Land Rover, or to apply myself in earnest to trying to make a pressure plate for one of my old folders which inexplicably arrived without this essential component. Or anything, really, just for a change. As I said at the beginning, variety is the spice of life. **AP**

amateur photographer

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